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PAPER CHASE

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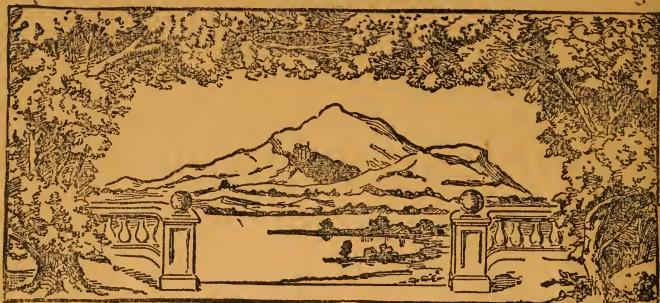
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The above can be seen mounted at 89, Strand, London. Full directions accompany each Scene.

THE PAPER CHASE.

FARCICAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS.

BY

CHARLES THOMAS.

LONDON:
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.,
PUBLISHERS,
89, STRAND.

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, T. HENRY FRENCH,
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26, WEST 22nd STREET

THE PAPER CHASE.

First performed at Toole's Theatre, on Monday, July 9th, 1888.

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Busby	...	...	...	MR. LIONEL BROUGH.
Mr. Baskerville...	...	...	...	MR. E. W. GARDEN.
Captain Kirby	...	...	...	MR. E. D. WARD.
Mr. Wagstaffe	...	...	...	MR. CECIL THORNBURY.
Inspector Glimmer	...	...	...	MR. ALEXANDER KNIGHT.
Dixon	...	...	...	MR. ROBERT SOUTAR.
Mrs. Baskerville	...	...	...	MISS HELEN LEYTON.
Mrs. Pomfret	...	...	...	MISS KATE PHILLIPS.
Nelly Busby	...	...	...	MISS MARGARET BROUGH.
Pedder	...	...	...	MISS M. ABBEY.

ACT I.—Morning-room in Mr. Baskerville's house in Bayswater. Morning.

ACT II.—Sitting-room in Mrs. Pomfret's apartments in hotel in Northumberland Avenue. Morning of next day.

ACT III.—Same as Act I. Evening of same day.

Time of Representation—Two Hours.

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THE PAPER CHASE.

ACT I.

SCENE. — *Morning-room in Mr. BASKERVILLE'S house in Bayswater. Fireplace C., at back ; door L.C., at back. Entrance to conservatory, L. Table R.C., at back. Sofa, R. Writing-table, L.C. Another door, R.*

DIXON discovered at writing-table, L.C., where a few letters and two or three papers are laid. He takes up the former and examines them closely.

DIXON. The way they fastens the henvelopes nowadays shows a want of confidence in 'uman nature what's hex-tremely 'urtful to the feelings of a hupper servant. Servant! Slave ! (*up to R.C., at back*)

Enter BASKERVILLE, L.C.; goes to writing-table, takes up letters, opens, and glances at them during the following scene. He also lays on writing-table two or three letters just written, and ready for post.

BASK. Mrs. Baskerville not down yet, Dixon ? (*sitting R. of writing-table*)

DIXON. No.

BASK. Oh ! (*looking at him severely*) I do wish you could contrive to be rather more respectful in your manner to me, Dixon ; I've mentioned it to you very often——

DIXON. My manners satisfied your father for thirty years. I'm too old to mend 'em now.

BASK. And really they don't appear to be worth mending. I should prefer your getting a new set.

DIXON. A new set ! What do you want to go and marry a new wife for—— (*coming down R.C.*)

BASK. Dixon, I wish you would not talk of me as if I were a Mormon. You seem to forget I have never been

married before. I suppose by "new wife" you mean a young wife.

DIXON. Ah, and you fifty if you're a day——

BASK. No, forty-nine only—and a half——

DIXON. If I had been you, I'd have thought twice before I let 'er come 'ome alone in the steamer from Bombay,

BASK. I couldn't help it, I was obliged to leave by the *Brahma Pootra*, in which there was no room for Mrs. Baskerville, who consequently had to follow in the *Irrawaddy*, It wasn't my fault.

DIXON. Let's 'ope it won't be your misfortune.

BASK. (*rising*) Do you dare to insinuate that my wife's behaviour on board is likely to have been other than it should have been, because I was not with her?

DIXON. Ho, dear no. (*aside*) But I'll be bound it was different.

BASK. (*going up*) I'm glad to hear it. Mrs. Baskerville is devoted to me. Why, when she arrived yesterday from Plymouth, though she was dead tired, she was so pleased to see me, so affectionate.

DIXON. (*crossing L., shaking his head*) That's bad. (*sets things straight on writing-table*)

BASK. Bad? (*coming down c.*)

DIXON. Of course she was obliged to pretend——

BASK. (*interrupting*) Pretend, sir!—

DIXON. Why don't it stand to reason that after parting with the other chap——

BASK. The other chap!

DIXON. Lor bless you! There's always another chap on board them steamers. (*L. of writing-table*)

BASK. Dixon, how dare you? (*coming R. of writing-table*)

DIXON. Oh, I don't want to make you uneasy, but I know the sex, and I knows you can't trust 'em—specially at sea—unless it's bad weather.

BASK. (*aside*) Ah, I wonder if they had a bad passage. (*takes a newspaper from writing-table mechanically*)

DIXON. Though that's no safeguard, if they're good sailors. (*up stage c.*)

BASK. (*aside, crossing R.*) And Maria is an excellent sailor, at least, I fancy she told me so—Oh! if I but thought—but no—(*sitting on sofa, R.*) I won't think. (*gazes abstractedly at the newspaper*)

DIXON. (*aside, watching him*) My words is a working. I'll teach 'im to bring 'ome a wife, what'll go poking 'er nose into heverythink, and a hinterfering with me, what 'as ruled this 'ere 'ouse a matter of twenty-five year. I think I've

paved the way for a little unpleasantness. (*looking out at door, L.C.*) 'Ere's the missus.

Enter MRS. BASKERVILLE, L.C.

BASK. (*jumping up, and crossing to her*) Ah, my dear, (*taking her by both hands*) here you are at last. Come, let me have a look at you. H'm (*suspiciously*), you don't look as if you had just undergone the trials and discomforts of a sea voyage. (*puts her on sofa, R.*)

MRS. B. (*at sofa*) My looks belie me then.

BASK. What! (*delighted*) you proved a bad sailor?

MRS. B. Shocking! (*aside*) What a shocking fib.

BASK. (*delighted; going up to DIXON L.C. at back; aside*) Do you hear that? I don't think I need trouble myself about the other chap, eh? (*DIXON sniffs suspiciously*) What do you mean by that, sir? (*he talks angrily aside to DIXON*)

MRS. B. What is he whispering about, I wonder? he can't have heard that, so far from being ill, I was the life and soul of the ship; nor that Captain Kirby was exceedingly attentive to me—— (*falls into a reverie*)

BASK. Another word, and I give you a month's warning. (*Exit DIXON, disdainfully, L.C.*) So, my dear, you had a bad passage. (*crosses to sofa and sits L. of MRS. BASKERVILLE*)

MRS. B. Dreadful!

BASK. (*aside*) Capital. (*jocosely*) So bad, in fact, that you never found your sea-legs?

MRS. B. So bad that I never even looked for them. (*aside*) Fib number two.

BASK. (*aside*) Highly satisfactory. (*aloud*) Dear, dear, so I suppose you kept to your berth?

MRS. B. Ye'es. (*aside*) Three.

BASK. Couldn't even sit up? (*rising*)

MRS. B. No, I found it more convenient to lie, (*aside*) and it continues to be more convenient.

Re-enter DIXON, L.C.

BASK. (*aside*) Most reassuring. Dixon's an ass. (*crossing L.*)

DIXON. (*down L. of MRS. BASKERVILLE*) A lady to see you. (*gives card to MRS. BASKERVILLE*)

MRS. B. (*aside, and rising. DIXON up to door, L.C.*) Mrs. Pomfret! (*agitated; after a pause*) A lady, my dear, whose acquaintance I made on board. Shall she come in here?

BASK. By all means, show her in. (*Exit DIXON, L.C.*)

MRS. B. We shared the same cabin, and so became somewhat intimate.

BASK. Naturally. I have formed intimacies myself under similar circumstances.

MRS. B. Joseph !

BASK. (L.) For instance, I made the acquaintance of my relation, Colonel Pontifex, in that very way.

Re-enter DIXON, L.C.

MRS. B. (R.C.) Oh !

DIXON. (*announcing*) Mrs. Pomfret.

Enter MRS. POMFRET, L.C.; she goes straight to MRS. BASKERVILLE and embraces her. Exit DIXON, L.C.

MRS. P. (L. of MRS. BASKERVILLE) Ah, my dear, here I am, you see. Well, how are you ? I'm first-rate, but no more voyages for me, thank you. Existence becomes too unsettled when you don't know from one moment to another whether you're on your head or your heels. (*in speaking, takes off bonnet and cloak and places them on table R. of fireplace*) And this is Mr. Baskerville, I presume. (*crossing to him*)

BASK. (L.C.) Delighted to see you, Mrs. Pomfret. So I hear you were a fellow passenger of my wife in the *Irrawaddy*.

MRS. P. (C.) I was indeed.

BASK. And a fellow sufferer, I fear.

MRS. P. A fellow sufferer, why—

MRS. B. (R.C., *interrupting*) What nonsense, Mr. Baskerville, Mrs. Pomfret is an excellent sailor, and was the life and soul of the ship. Weren't you, Amelia ? (*aside*) Say you were.

MRS. P. (*flabbergasted*) But—Oh, yes, certainly.

BASK. I'm delighted to hear it. Poor Maria was prostrate the whole time.

MRS. B. Oh, I thought I should have died. Didn't I, Amelia ? (*aside*) Say I did.

MRS. P. Oh, it was most distressing.

MRS. B. (*aside*) Fib number—I've lost count.

BASK. Well, you're both safe and sound now at all events. But as I've no doubt you have plenty to talk about, with your permission, Mrs. Pomfret, I'll leave you. (*takes paper and goes L., towards conservatory. Aside*) A deuced fine woman. (*Exits into conservatory*)

MRS. P. (*sitting on sofa, R. To MRS. BASKERVILLE*) Now perhaps you will explain the meaning of all this, for I may remind you that it was I, not you, who was prostrate the whole time, and that it was you, not I—oh, there, I don't know what you did !

MRS. B. (*sitting on sofa R. of MRS. POMFRET*) That's just it. The fact was that while you were confined to the cabin, owing to—

MRS. P. Never mind the reason, I know it.

MRS. B. I passed my time chiefly on deck, and if I did flirt a little, where was the harm?

MRS. P. Where indeed? I've often done it myself—onshore.

MRS. B. All I know is that he was very nice and kind.

MRS. P. Who was he?—Oh well, never mind.

MRS. B. Well, one day when we were sitting on the—binnacle, I think they call it—he put a letter into my hand.

MRS. P. Dear me!

MRS. B. Oh, it was full of the most lovely things, and wound up by asking me to marry him.

MRS. P. Didn't he know you were married?

MRS. B. Ahem! He thought I was a widow.

MRS. P. But the captain of the *Irrawaddy* knew your husband.

MRS. B. Yes, but he had never seen me before.

MRS. P. I suppose he wasn't quite a fool, and knowing that Mr. Baskerville had previously taken your passage, and that you were Mrs. Baskerville——

MRS. B. He—he didn't know it.

MRS. P. What do you mean?

MRS. B. In fact, very few were aware that there was a Mrs. Baskerville on board, and even they didn't know which was which.

MRS. P. Which of who was which?

MRS. B. You and I.

MRS. P. But——

MRS. B. (*hastily*) Well, I thought perhaps, if Mr. Baskerville, who is of a most jealous disposition, were to hear anything about it——

MRS. P. It?

MRS. B. (*timidly*) The—the binnacle—he might be rather annoyed.

MRS. P. (*drily*) It was possible.

MRS. B. So—oh dear, oh dear, don't look at me like that—I gave out that you were Mrs. Baskerville, and that I was Mrs. Pomfret. I—I didn't mean any harm.

MRS. P. (*rising like an offended goddess*) You didn't mean! You engage in a disreputable flirtation on board a vessel of inferior stability, and then endeavour to screen yourself from the consequences by—Oh, I shall choke! (*while speaking she crosses to L. and back again to R., where she sits on R. end of sofa. In great agitation MRS. BASKERVILLE follows her round, and leaning over her, endeavours in dumb show to soothe her, but without success. At the same moment enter DIXON, L.C., with a card on salver, which he takes to BASKERVILLE, who enters from conservatory*)

DIXON. (c.) I've shown 'im into your study——

BASK. (L.C.) Eh? What? (*taking card; reads*) Captain Thomas Kirby, Rifle Brigade.

MRS. B. (*sinking on sofa, L. of MRS. POMFRET*) Ah! (MRS. POMFRET *starts up*)

BASK. What's the matter? (*crosses to her*)

MRS. B. (*recovering*) Oh, nothing—the effects of the voyage—my salts please, on the mantelpiece. (BASKERVILLE *goes up to fireplace; aside to MRS. POMFRET*) Amelia, it's he.

MRS. P. (*behind the sofa; bewildered*) He?

MRS. B. Yes—you know—Irrawaddy!

MRS. P. Ah!

BASK. (*at mantelpiece*) I don't see the salts.

MRS. B. Never mind, I'm better now.

BASK. (*coming down L. of her*) That's right. This Captain Kirby is the son of an old friend of mine. (*going c.*) Dear me, here's something written on the back of his card, "Just arrived in the *Irrawaddy* from Bombay." (*aside to DIXON, uneasily*) Dixon, do you think he's the other chap?

DIXON. (L. of him *at back of writing-table. Aside*) He looks werry like him.

BASK. (*suspicious*) Ah! tell him I'll be with him directly. (*Exit DIXON, L.C. Coming down c. to MRS. BASKERVILLE*) Then, my dear, I suppose you know Captain Kirby?

MRS. B. (*on sofa*) Only from Amelia's description.

MRS. P. (*aside, R. of her*) What are you talking about?

BASK. Oh, you know him, Mrs. Pomfret?

MRS. P. I? (*coming round sofa, between them*)

MRS. B. (*hastily*) Oh, yes, Amelia knows him very well.

BASK. Did you like him?

MRS. P. (*between her teeth*) Did I, Maria?

MRS. B. Why you know you did, and (*playfully*) you said he was very handsome.

BASK. Ha, ha! Takes after his father. But I mustn't keep him waiting. You'll excuse me, won't you? (*Exit, L.C.*)
MRS. POMFRET *goes up to table, R.C., at back, and takes bonnet, &c.*

MRS. B. (*jumps up, crosses to door, L.C., and looks after him, then turns to MRS. POMFRET*) Amelia! He mustn't see me. Oh, what shall I do?

MRS. P. (*at fireplace*) Don't ask me! I know what I am going to do. (*begins to put on her bonnet, &c., before the chimney glass*)

MRS. B. You're not going?

MRS. P. Do you expect me to stop and marry Captain Kirby, because you chose to sit on the binnacle with him?

MRS. B. Wait a minute, I have another little something to tell you.

MRS. P. A little something? (*replacing her bonnet on table, R.C.*) What is the trifle? (*advances on her.* MRS. BASKERVILLE *retreats and sits R. of writing-table*)

MRS. B. You may remember that soon after leaving Bombay you said that the lock of your travelling bag was insecure, and asked me to take care of your papers for you?

MRS. P. (*R. of her*) Ah, by the way that's what I came here for, only your artless confessions put it out of my head. (*standing over her*)

MRS. B. Well, when that storm in the Bay of Biscay came on—you remember?

MRS. P. You needn't remind me. (*with a shudder*)

MRS. B. I was so frightened that I handed all my valuables, together with your papers, to Captain Kirby.

MRS. P. Good gracious! Why?

MRS. B. Was it not natural that in a time of peril I should cling to him—who had just paid me the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman?

MRS. P. An *unmarried* woman. (*crosses R.*)

MRS. B. (*rising*) Good gracious, Amelia, how narrow-minded you are! Was I at such a moment to be fettered with social niceties? (*following her*)

MRS. P. (*R.C.*) I'll tell you who can best answer that question—your husband.

MRS. B. (*C.*) My husband!

MRS. P. Yes, you had forgotten him, but he's a social nicety, rather difficult to be overlooked.

MRS. B. (*laying her hand appealingly on MRS. POMFRET'S arm*) Don't be hard on me. I have no tastes in common with Mr. Baskerville. I am young, while he is middle-aged, —can you then wonder that when I met a congenial nature like Captain Kirby's—

MRS. P. (*shaking her off. She retreats, L.C.*) Congenial fiddlestick! Of course Baskerville's a brute—all husbands are—but you ought to make the best of him. But about these papers? (*sitting, L.C.*)

MRS. B. (*L. of writing-table, unlocks drawer, and takes out a bundle of papers*) Here they are, all but—all but No. 3 on the list.

MRS. P. No. 3! (*taking them and hastily running through them*) The most valuable of the lot, the celebrated curry recipe of the Rajah of Boggleyepore, which, properly managed, would have been worth thousands. Where is it? (*rising*)

MRS. B. I don't know; it was among them when I gave them to Captain Kirby.

MRS. P. You must ask him for it.

MRS. B. How can I? I daren't let him see me.

MRS. P. (*meditatively, coming down c.*) H'm, let me see. You said something about a letter he wrote you.

MRS. B. (*after fumbling in her pocket*) Here it is. (*coming down L. of her*)

TOM. (*without, laughing*) Ha! ha! ha!

MRS. B. (*starting*) That's his laugh. My husband and he are coming here. I'll slip out through the conservatory.

MRS. P. Quick then, they're here. (*pushes her out by conservatory L. and stands in the opening, watching her off*) Safe!

Enter BASKERVILLE and TOM, L.C. MRS. POMFRET concealed from them by curtains of conservatory, but in view of audience.

BASK. (*laughing*) Capital, capital! (*looking round*) Dear me, where are the ladies? Well, I daresay they'll be back presently. Go on with your story. (*stands at fireplace*)

TOM. (*sitting R. of writing-table, and putting his hat on table*) Well, you see when this storm came on, all the women where panic-stricken, my charmer among the rest; in her fright she rushed from her cabin, threw all her papers and valuables into my hands, and herself on the top of them. (*pauses*) She was in curl papers and I was disillusioned. Arrived at Plymouth, I restored her property, and took the next train to London.

BASK. Leaving her disconsolate. But you'll return to her?

TOM. Never! Her place in my heart is filled.

BASK. So soon? (*coming down, R.C.*)

TOM. It is a little sudden, but oh, Mr. Baskerville, you have heard of love at first sight; it has been my fate to experience it!

BASK. And where? (*sits on sofa, R.*)

TOM. In the train from Plymouth.

BASK. And did she, I mean the new she, reciprocate?

TOM. How could she with her stupid old father at her side?

BASK. Ah, what a nuisance those old fathers are, aren't they?

TOM. But when at length he slept, oh, then we talked—I gazed—she blushed—I took her hand—she smiled—I raised it to my lips, and then——(*rising*)

BASK. What then? (*eagerly*)

TOM. The old man woke.

BASK. Ha, ha, ha! (*rising*) You're just like your father, who was for ever in love!

TOM. Just like you, too, then.

BASK. (c.) Like me?

TOM. (R. of him) Yes; when my father told me to come and look you up he said, "I should like to see old Baskerville again—by George, he was the boy for the ladies."

BASK. (nervously) Hush! (then with conscious pride) Did he? eh, did he? Well, the fact is that—er—you know—(winks portentously) But that was a long time ago.

TOM. (looking him up and down) I suppose so. So you're no longer a lady killer.

BASK. (with a sigh) Times have sadly changed.

TOM. What, is the game scarce?

BASK. No, but I'm not so deadly as I used to be—not that I ever attempt now to fascinate any one but my wife.

TOM. Ah, rather uninteresting that, isn't it?

BASK. Perhaps. (sighing) But if I didn't do it, someone else would.

TOM. That is your experience?

BASK. As someone else—yes. But, by the way, what did you say was the name of the lady in curl papers? (MRS. POMFRET re-enters softly from conservatory)

TOM. My dear fellow, when I make a lady's acquaintance under such circumstances I always make a point of forgetting her name.

MRS. P. (coming forward L.) Can I assist your memory? (BASKERVILLE starts. TOM puzzled) Was it by any chance, Pomfret? (BASKERVILLE explodes with laughter aside)

TOM. (c., aside) Hullo, what does this mean?

MRS. P. (L.C., laughing) You must forgive me for leaving you so abruptly at Plymouth, but I knew you would find me out, and follow me.

BASK. (R.C., to TOM aside) Hullo, this is a different version from yours.

TOM. But, ma'am, there's some mistake; I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance.

MRS. P. Mistake! (laughing) Ah! you always will have your joke. (goes up L.) Oh, Mr. Baskerville, Maria requested me to say she had gone to lie down; that terrible voyage, you know. (crosses at back of sofa and sits on sofa, R.)

BASK. (aside to TOM) This is your charmer, eh?

TOM. Nonsense, I don't know the woman.

BASK. She looks as if she wanted an old father to look after her. (going L.C.)

TOM. (following him) Confound it! I tell you—

BASK. That I'm in the way? I feel I am. (Exit in roars of laughter, L.C.)

TOM. (up stage, aside) What an ass Baskerville is.

MRS. P. (*on sofa*) Captain Kirby ! Tom, dear, dear Tom, so you have come back to me.

TOM. I repeat, ma'am, you are mistaken, you have somehow got hold of my name, but I don't know you. (*sits R. of writing-table*)

MRS. P. You silly boy, have done with this foolish pretence, I am not to be taken in.

TOM. (*aside*) No, she looks as if she might know a thing or two.

MRS. P. I know why you have come after me.

TOM. Do you ?

MRS. P. Yes, you want an answer.

TOM. Do I ?

MRS. P. Yes, to your letter.

TOM. Letter, ma'am ! I never wrote to you in my life.

MRS. P. You never wrote to me ?

TOM. Certainly not !

MRS. P. Was ever the like heard ! (*rising*) You'll say next that my name is not Amelia Pomfret.

TOM. I do say so. I know Amelia Pomfret, and you are not she.

MRS. P. Grant me patience ! And we were not fellow passengers on board the *Irrawaddy* ?

TOM. Most distinctly we were not !

MRS. P. And you didn't compromise me in the eyes of all on board by your marked attentions ?

TOM. (L.C.) A most preposterous suggestion.

MRS. P. What wretched memory you have, Captain Kirby ! (*coming c., holding up letter*) Do you know your handwriting ? Do you know your signature ? Do the contents seem familiar to you ? Do you among others recognise the obligation thrust upon you by this phrase ? (*he tries to snatch it, she baulks him ; reads*) "Amelia, let me sum up all that I have said in one short sentence, be my wife." And if you don't recognise the obligation, is it your opinion that a British jury will ? (*goes up c. with simulated agitation*)

TOM. (*aside, down L.*) This is awkward, but what does it all mean ? It's my letter sure enough, but how did she get hold of it ? Hang me, if I don't think it's a plot ; but how to find a clue to the mystery ? Ah, I have it. I'll accept the position, make fierce love to her, and if she doesn't betray herself, why——

MRS. P. (R.C.) Well, Captain Kirby, I'm waiting your answer.

TOM. (*bursting out laughing and crossing to L. of MRS. POMFRET, who is rather up stage*) And here it is. I was only

joking all the time. (*puts his arm round her waist and tries to kiss her*)

MRS. P. (*trying to free herself*) Sir ! What have you seen in my conduct to warrant your taking such a liberty ?

TOM. You didn't consider it a liberty on board the *Irrawaddy*.

MRS. P. Didn't I ? (*aside*) Mrs. Baskerville ought to be ashamed of herself. (*severely*) Your conduct since our arrival in England, Captain Kirby, requires explanation, (*frees herself*) before we resume—where we left off. May I ask why you thought fit to desert me at Plymouth, and come to London ? (*down R.*)

TOM. (L.C.) Certainly ; it was love !

MRS. P. Love ! A pretty way of showing it !

TOM. The fact is, I wished to test the truth of the proverb, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and "Distance lends enchantment to the view."

MRS. P. Well, sir ?

TOM. (*coming c.*) Amelia, they are true, so much so, indeed, that I have become convinced that the longer and further we are apart, the fonder I shall become of you, and that if you were at Hong-Kong, and I at New York, I should love you with a passionate devotion—

MRS. P. (*R. of him*) Is this your explanation ? Perfidious wretch, you have stolen my heart, and you give me nothing in return.

TOM. Pardon me, I give you my love—

MRS. P. Yes, when I'm in Hong-Kong, and you're in New York.

TOM. You must allow an ardent lover a little latitude.

MRS. P. But not so many degrees as that. No, Captain Kirby, you must manage to confine your affections within reasonable limits. (*crosses R. and sits on sofa. TOM R.C., standing at end of sofa*)

Enter BASKERVILLE, L.C.

BASK. (*who has rattled at the handle of the door and coughed so as to warn them*) Oh, Mrs. Pomfret, I must apologise on Maria's behalf, and on my own, for leaving you. But I've no doubt Captain Kirby—(*down R. of writing-table*)

MRS. P. Has been most entertaining.

TOM. (*very polite*) It was as a listener then, but indeed no one could fail to be interested in Mrs. Pomfret's reminiscences—of her husband. (*watching her to see the effect of his words*)

MRS. P. (*startled, and off her guard*) Eh, what ?

BASK. (*aside*) Her husband !

TOM. (*aside*) Aha ! my lady, I have caught you. (*aloud*) From whom, my dear Baskerville, she was separated ten years ago after six weeks of married life. (*to MRS. POMFRET*) Incompatibility of temper, I fancy !

MRS. P. Just so !

BASK. Dear, dear, how very unfortunate.

TOM. But not extraordinary, considering Mrs. Pomfret was then eighteen, and her husband forty-nine !

MRS. P. (*aside*) That cat, Maria, impersonated me with a vengeance ; she has evidently told him everything. That comes of confiding in a woman.

BASK. (*maliciously*) Ah, such disparity in age is fatal.

MRS. P. Have you found it so, Mr. Baskerville ?

BASK. Ma'am ! (*taken aback*) Confound her impertinence ! (*aside. Goes L.*)

TOM. Your husband's death was very sudden, I believe.

MRS. P. It was.

BASK. (*aside*) Oh, he is dead.

TOM. Run over by a hansom in Piccadilly, I think.

MRS. P. No, by an omnibus in High Holborn.

BASK. (*sympathising and crossing to her*) Dear, dear, extremely sad. It must have made a very deep impression on you ?

MRS. P. It made a very deep impression on *him*.

BASK. Indeed !

TOM. Well, Baskerville, I must be off. (*taking hat and going towards door, L.C.*)

BASK. I'll see you out. (*crossing him to door, L.C. Exit BASKERVILLE, L.C.*)

MRS. P. (*crossing and intercepting TOM as he is following*) One moment before you go. When we were on board the *Irrawaddy*, I gave you certain papers to take care of. (*taking away his hat*)

TOM. (*L.C. at back, staggered, aside*) She knows that too. Which I restored to you at Plymouth.

MRS. P. (*R. of him at back*) All except one. (*goes to table, R.C., at back and puts his hat down*)

TOM. (*aside, down C.*) Oh, oh ! This looks more like a plant than ever. What am I to say ? It is impossible I can give that paper to anyone but the person who confided it to me, and she isn't the person, I'll take my oath.

MRS. P. (*coming down R. of him*) Come, my dear Tom, where is it ?

TOM. My dearest Amelia, I was just thinking where I had put it.

MRS. P. And you remember ?

TOM. Perfectly ; it is in my lodgings in the right hand top drawer of my bureau. I'll go and fetch it. (*going, L.C.*)

MRS. P. I'll come with you. (*detaining him*)

TOM. (*L.C. at back*) You surely won't think of doing so.

MRS. P. Why not? (*R. of him at back*)

TOM. A bachelor's rooms, you know, people might talk.

MRS. P. Let 'em! Are we not engaged?

TOM. I—I suppose so, but yet——

MRS. P. I'll have no buts; come along. (*leading him to door, L.C.*)

TOM. (*aside*) What the devil shall I do?

Enter DIXON, L.C.

DIXON. Mr. and Miss Busby!

TOM. Reprieved! (*down R.C.*)

MRS. P. (*aside, down L.*) Busby! Good Heavens! What an extraordinary coincidence! Pshaw! It's a common name enough. (*half conceals herself with curtains at entrance of conservatory*)

Enter BUSBY and NELLY, L.C. (NOTE.—BUSBY'S hat should be white with a black hatband, but not extravagant as to shape.) Exit DIXON, L.C.

MRS. P. (*seeing BUSBY*) Ah, it is he, my husband; even after ten years' separation I can't be mistaken. Then the report of his death was not true. (*while she is speaking, BUSBY, who is puzzled as to what he has come for, is prompted aside by NELLY*)

BUS. (*crossing R. to Tom*) How d'ye do, Baskerville? (*shaking TOM by the hand, who is transfixed by the sight of NELLY*) I just stepped in on a little matter of business.

NELLY. (*L. of BUSBY, joyfully on seeing TOM*) Papa, that's not Mr. Baskerville, it—it's Captain Kirby. (*whispers to BUSBY*)

MRS. P. (*at entrance to conservatory, aside*) My step-daughter evidently. Happily she was at school abroad when I married, and never saw me——

BUS. (*to NELLY*) Speak up, you tickle me.

NELLY. It's the gentleman who was so kind to us at Waterloo.

BUS. (*seizing TOM's hand*) Have I then the honour of grasping by the hand one of the veteran survivors of that celebrated engagement?

NELLY. No, no, papa, I mean Waterloo station! The gentleman who looked after our luggage. (*goes up a little*)

BUS. Oh, I see. How d'ye do, Mr. Porter? (*nodding to TOM*) There's sixpence for you for being so attentive!

NELLY. (*coming down between them*) Papa! (*snatching the sixpence*) He's not a porter!

BUS. (*moving c. and beckoning her to follow*) Why did he take the sixpence, then? (*confidentially*)

NELLY. (*R. of him*) He didn't, I took it!

BUS. Then give it me back.

NELLY. No.

BUS. Oh! Who d'you say he is?

NELLY. Don't you remember the gentleman in the train from Plymouth, yesterday, who went halves with me in my pork-pie, when you were asleep in the corner?

BUS. In the first place, my dear, how can I remember what took place when I was asleep? In the second, how could I go to sleep in the corner of a pork-pie? (*wanders L.C.*)

NELLY. No, papa, the corner of the carriage. (*crossing to TOM*) How do you do, sir?

TOM. (*who has been in silent admiration during the foregoing*) How do you do? I hope you are quite well? (*shake hands*)

NELLY. Quite well, thanks. I hope you'll excuse papa, but his memory is not as good as it used to be. (*crosses to R. of BUSBY; aside*) Papa, say something!

BUS. Ahem! (*crossing to TOM, R.*) I'm afraid you don't remember me, sir, but I was in the carriage when my daughter gave a corner of the pork-pie to the porter.

TOM. My dear sir, I remember you perfectly, charmed to see you again. (*TOM, BUSBY, and NELLY talk aside. BUSBY sitting on sofa*)

MRS. P. (*aside, at entrance to conservatory*) What is to be done? The question is, will he recognise me? If he does, he may want me to return to him, which may not suit me at all. Then, too, if Captain Kirby discovers that I've a husband living, instead of my having a hold on that gallant officer, he will have a hold on me. I must think this over. (*retires into conservatory. BUSBY sitting R.C., having put his hat on, calmly smiling at nothing in particular; TOM and NELLY whispering together behind him*)

Enter BASKERVILLE, L.C.

BASK. (*coming down c.*) You were asking for Mr. Baskerville, I believe? (*to BUSBY*)

BUS. (*rising*) How do you do, sir? (*shaking BASKERVILLE warmly by the hand*) Lovely weather for the time of year, ain't it? (*both down c.*)

BASK. (*L. of BUSBY*) Have you called merely to inform me of that fact, sir?

NELLY. (*coming down R. of BUSBY*) Papa, your hat!

BUS. What's the matter with it?

NELLY. It's on your head.

BUS. Quite so, my dear, where do you expect me to wear it? (NELLY *in despair*)

BASK. It is usual, sir, to take your hat off on entering a gentleman's house. (NELLY *goes up to TOM, R.C. at back*)

BUS. So it is. (*taking it off*) The fact is my hat is a trifle too large for me, and I don't always know when I've got it on. (*puts it on again; BASKERVILLE twitches it off and puts it down on writing-table*) I'm very much obliged to you. (*shaking BASKERVILLE by the hand*) Won't you sit down?

BASK. Yes, sir, I will. (*sits L. of writing-table and glares at BUSBY*) May I know the nature of your business with me?

BUS. (*sitting R. of writing-table*) Oh, certainly. (*producing newspaper cutting*) Read that. (*puts hat on again in an absent manner*)

BASK. (*reading*) "To the bald:—Criniturus! Criniturus!! Criniturus!!! (*sees BUSBY has his hat on, snatches it off again and places it on writing-table. BUSBY shakes him gratefully by the hand, which annoys BASKERVILLE dreadfully*) An infallible specific for promoting the growth of the hair, harmless, effective, and agreeable." "Apply by letter for prescription, enclosing thirteen stamps, to M.D., Post Office, 753, Strand, W.C." Well, sir? (*BUSBY has slowly put his hat on again*)

BUS. Well, I sent you the thirteen stamps—

BASK. Sent me! (*sees BUSBY's hat, same business as before*)

BUS. But as I didn't get an answer I thought I'd call on you, and here I am—kindly examine my head. (*rises, stands before BASKERVILLE, and puts his head in BASKERVILLE's face*)

BASK. Sir!

BUS. You'll hardly believe me, but I used to have a lot of hair. (NELLY *watching him anxiously*)

BASK. Confound it, sir, I'm not a hairdresser.

BUS. Ain't that your advertisement?

BASK. No, it isn't, any more than this is the Strand.

BUS. Then where are my stamps?

BASK. Sir!

NELLY. (*coming down R. of BUSBY*) Papa, what are you talking about? (*BUSBY sits R. of writing-table*) This is Mr. Baskerville. (*to BASKERVILLE*) I beg your pardon, sir, papa used to have an excellent memory, but now he seems to be able to remember nothing except that he's forgotten something. (*BUSBY puts on hat as before*)

BASK. (*aside*) No wonder his hair fell off. (*sees BUSBY's hat, same business*)

MRS. P. (*aside; appearing in conservatory entrance, L.*) If

I could only get my bonnet and cloak, I'd be off. (*begins to cross stealthily to table by fireplace*)

BASK. Let me see if I can't jog his memory to some purpose—(*to BUSBY*) You were saying, sir——

BUS. (*puzzled*) Was I? (*looks round and sees NELLY*) Oh, yes. That this is my daughter Nelly. (*rising; NELLY goes up*)

TOM. Nelly! What a charming name! (*aside*)

BUS. Fine girl, ain't she, takes after me, I'm told! (*turns to look after her, and catches sight of MRS. POMFRET who has got to table R.C. at back*) Oh, I beg pardon. (*rising and bowing*) Your daughter, I suppose? Charming! charming! (*crossing R. to MRS. POMFRET, who comes down R. in doubt and agitation*) You take after your father, my dear.

MRS. P. (*aside*) Victory! He doesn't know me!

BASK. (*stiffly*) That is not my daughter, sir, that is a friend of my wife. (*rising*)

MRS. P. (R.) Who is delighted to make the acquaintance of Mr.—Mr.——?

BUS. (R.C., *looking at corner of his handkerchief*) J. Busby, twelve.

MRS. P. (*aside*) He hasn't thought it necessary to follow my example and change his name. (*talks aside to TOM.*)

BASK. (*standing L. of writing-table*) Now, sir, to business. (*rapping on table*)

BUS. (*crossing to R. of writing-table*) I'm very much obliged to you for reminding me, I know I'm apt to be a little discursive, but now you shall have my best attention. (*sits; business with hat as before*) What can I do for you? (*settles himself in listening attitude*)

BASK. (*furious*) Nothing! (*jumping up*)

BUS. (*rising*) Oh, then I'll say good morning! (*confidentially*) By Jove, what a fine girl your daughter is! (*looking at MRS. POMFRET*)

BASK. I repeat, sir, that lady is not my daughter, but a friend of my wife.

BUS. You said the other one was a friend of your wife.

BASK. It's the same, sir.

BUS. Then where's your daughter?

BASK. I haven't a daughter.

BUS. Then what have you done with her?

BASK. Confound it, sir, I never had a daughter!

BUS. Never had a daughter! (*crossing R. to MRS. POMFRET*) My dear, your poor father's memory is going!

BASK. (*in despair*) Kirby, do make him understand.

TOM. (*coming down, R.C.*) Allow me to explain.

BUS. (R. of him) Kirby ! Why you said your name was Porter just now.

TOM. I never did.

BUS. Oh, come now, I appeal to Mrs. Porter. (*turning to MRS. POMFRET ; he then sits on sofa*)

MRS. P. (R.) I think Mr. Baskerville that as my presence seems to be a little confusing to Mr. Busby I'll just go and see your wife for a few minutes. (*goes behind sofa towards door, L.C., and as she passes TOM, says aside*) Go and fetch that paper, and bring it here, and fail at your peril ! (*Exit MRS. POMFRET, L.C. ; BASKERVILLE sits on sofa L. of BUSBY, and tries to attract his attention, without success*)

TOM. (C. ; *aside, taking paper from his pocket*) What shall I do ? I mustn't give it to her ; I'd better pretend I've lost it. Ah ! (*beckoning NELLY, who approaches*) Miss Busby, you see this paper, it has been confided to my custody by a—by a—party, but a—another party has designs on it. Therefore it is important that I should be able to say, if asked the question, that I haven't got it. Will you enable me to answer that question truthfully ?

NOTE.—*The recipe must be on blue paper, and in a long, blue envelope.*

NELLY. And take care of the paper for you ? (*taking it without looking at it*) Of course I will. (*aside, going up, followed by TOM*) How sweet it is to share his responsibilities. (*during the above BASKERVILLE has been trying to talk to BUSBY*)

BASK. (*rising*) Once for all, sir, what do you want ? (*crosses to L. of writing-table*)

BUS. That's what I want to know. (*crossing to R. of writing-table*)

NELLY. (*coming down R. of him*) Papa, why don't you refer to your note-book ?

BUS. A capital idea. (*sitting, takes note-book from pocket, and consults it*) Aha ! I've got it. Waggstaffe !

BASK. (*sitting*) Waggstaffe ! (*TOM and NELLY steal off into conservatory*)

BUS. And—(*quoting*)—and Wigsby, solicitors, Broad-street, Bristol, old friends of mine, and Waggstaffe, co-executor with me of late Colonel Pontifex.

BASK. *Late* Colonel Pontifex ! Are you referring to Colonel John Pontifex of Pontifex's horse ?

BUS. (*consulting note-book*) That's right, who died at Bombay on the 17th of March last. Consult Baskerville. Though I don't know why.

BASK. Then I can tell you, because I am his second cousin, once—now alas—twice removed.

BUS. Are you? So am I.

BASK. Rubbish!

BUS. Not at all—why, I married my second wife from his house—let me see, Amelia Carberry, that was her name.

BASK. Where is she?

BUS. Well, I left her in Tottenham Court-road.

BASK. Is she still there?

BUS. I doubt it, that was in 1881. You see, when we had been married nearly six weeks, and Nelly was about eight years old, I found Amelia was the exact opposite of my dear first wife, Nelly's mother, so we separated.

BASK. Judicially?

BUS. We considered it judicious at the time. (*rises*)

BASK. (*rises*) I said judicially, was it a legal separation, or by mutual consent?

BUS. Oh, mutual consent. I remember that, because it was the only point we ever agreed upon.

BASK. And you've never heard of her since?

BUS. (*looking at notes; crosses, R.*) Oh, yes, I heard of her death five years ago; it appears she went to India and found a premature grave in the interior of a sacred crocodile.

BASK. Very sad. But come, Mr. Busby, didn't the lawyer give you any idea as to the terms of the will?

BUS. Let me see. (*turns over pages of notebook*)

Re-enter MRS. POMFRET, L.C.

MRS. P. (*aside*) I've told Maria to keep close.

Enter DIXON, L.C.

BUS. (*with note-book*) Ah, here it is. (*sits on sofa*)

DIXON. (*to BASKERVILLE*) Any letters for the midday post?

BASK. (*sits on sofa, L. of BUSBY*) On the writing-table. (*DIXON goes to L. of writing-table*)

MRS. P. (*aside, up L.*) What are they doing?

TOM and NELLY re-enter from conservatory, and cross to R. up stage.

BUS. (*reads*) Colonel Pontifex's fortune, amounting to about one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds, is left to the person who finds the famous recipe for curry invented by the Rajah of Boggleyepore.

MRS. P. (*sitting L. of writing-table*) What do I hear? (*aside*)

BUS. (*reading*) But in default of the recipe being forthcoming within twelve months the property goes to the next of kin.

BASK. Ah, this becomes interesting.

BUS. (*reading*) The next of kin being Joseph Baskerville.

Anyone know him? (*NELLY who has come down R. of him nudges him and whispers*) Eh? Oh, yes, of course. (*reads*) And John Busby—Busby—Busby—, I seem to know that name.

NELLY. Papa, you are John Busby.

BUS. Eh? Oh, of course.

BASK. Sixty thousand pounds a piece, eh?

TOM. (*C., up stage, with a side glance at MRS. POMFRET*) Unless the recipe be forthcoming.

BASK. Ah, what an iniquitous provision to make.

BUS. (*reading*) The reason for it appears to be that Colonel Pontifex was an enthusiastic collector of curry recipes; the gem of his collection was, however, the Boggleyepore Recipe, and when one day it was found to be missing, and being missing, was not to be found, he made this will in the hope that it might conduce to the recovery of the lost paper.

MRS. P. (*rising and coming L.C.*) Captain Kirby, where is my property? (*NELLY up to R. of TOM*)

TOM. The fact is, Mrs. Pomfret, it is no longer in my possession.

MRS. P. Indeed! (*agitated*) Gentlemen, at the sale of Colonel Pontifex's effects at Bombay, I bought an old writing desk, in a secret drawer of which I found the famous recipe. That recipe is no longer in my possession, for there (*pointing to TOM*) stands the individual who has robbed me of it. (*crosses R.*)

NELLY, *during the above, her suspicions being aroused, has looked surreptitiously at the recipe, which she takes from her pocket, and then looks inquiringly at TOM, who avoids her gaze—seeing this she crosses behind him to L. of him.*

ALL. Robbed! (*BASKERVILLE rises, secretly delighted. NELLY utters a cry, and comes down to R. of writing-table, against which she supports herself by resting her left hand, in which she holds the recipe, on the table, gazing meanwhile with horror at TOM, who stands C. in confusion and perplexity*)

MRS. P. Aye! Robbed!

NELLY. (*clasps her hands and makes a step towards TOM. By this action she leaves recipe on table, unobserved by anyone except DIXON, who is L. of writing-table, pretending to be busied about letters for post, in reality listening with great interest to all that is going on*) Captain Kirby, why don't you speak?

MRS. P. (*R.*) Because he can't, because he daren't. Look at him where he stands, pale and speechless with the consciousness of the fraud he has perpetrated on an unprotected

female, a fraud which he has been able to bring to a successful issue, not by the recognised methods of the criminal classes, but by the base subterfuge of offering to marry me.

DIXON *during the above has taken the opportunity to examine the recipe unobserved.*

DIXON. (*aside*) The werry article. I'll mind it for them ! (*puts it in his pocket and exits L.C.*)

NELLY. Captain Kirby, is this true ? Did you make this offer ?

TOM. I don't know, I only know I'm a wretched individual, forgive me, Miss Busby, and forget we ever lunched together.

NELLY. (*coming c.*) Oh, what have I done to be treated so ? That document which you have lost, Mrs. Pomfret (*TOM makes signs to stop her, which she will not see*), and which Captain Kirby handed to me, I now restore to you. (*BASKERVILLE dismayed; she makes a movement as if to hand it, then discovers her hands are empty*) Why, what's this ? Gone ! I had it a moment ago. !

MRS. P. Gone !

BASK. (*delighted again*) Think when you had it last. (*goes down R. rubbing his hands*)

NELLY. Why, I had it in my hand when I was standing with—Captain Kirby, up there.

MRS. P. And then you came down here. (*R. of writing-table*)

NELLY. Ah, I remember, I dropped it on the table. (*going to R. of writing-table*)

TOM. It's not here now. (*L. of writing-table*)

MRS. P. (*to BASKERVILLE*) Your servant must have taken it with the letters for post. You'll allow me. (*rings the bell. DIXON appears L.C.*)

BASK. (*graciously*) Dixon, have you posted the letters ? (*music*)

DIXON. Yes, they was only just in time.

BASK. (*aside*) Hurrah !

MRS. P. Among them was there one in a long blue envelope ?

DIXON. Let me see, I didn't take pertickler notice, but I think there was.

MRS. P. Then I'm ruined, for the envelope had my late address on it—Mrs. Pomfret, Delhi Bungalow, Malabar Point, Bombay.

BASK. On the contrary, you are all right, for in that case it will be returned to you.

MRS. P. It won't, for I've sold the Bungalow, and left no address.

BUS. Is that where the hairdresser lives?

ALL. No!

MRS. POMFRET *falls on sofa*, R. of BUSBY. BASKERVILLE R., *secretly delighted*. BUSBY *puzzled*. NELLY *repulsing* TOM, R. and L. of *writing-table*. DIXON *examines recipe surreptitiously up stage*, L.C.

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE.—MRS. POMFRET's apartment in a hotel in Northumberland Avenue. Doors L.C., R., R.U.E., and L. Writing-table against wall, L., with rubbish basket by it. On the writing-table a Post-office Directory. Occasional table, R.C. Fireplace, R. Large practicable window, C. (NOTE.—This may either be a French window opening on to a balcony, or a wide sash window.) Sofa by fireplace. Through the window, which is open, are seen the houses opposite.

Enter PEDDER and DIXON, L.C.

PED. You can come in if you like, Mrs. Pomfret will be here directly. (*crosses R.C.*)

DIXON. (*placing hat on chair, L., at back*) A little more respect, if you please, young woman. (*coming down C.*) One 'ud think as you was a-speaking to your missus. What's them? (*referring to some papers in her hands, which she places on table, R.C.*)

PED. Tradesmen's circulars, your R'yal 'Ighness. (*crossing to L.C.*) You ain't above knowing what *they* are, are you? (*Exit, L.C.*)

DIXON. (C.) Himperance! (*taking recipe from his pocket, after looking cautiously round*) I begin to wish I 'adn't collared this 'ere paper, but when I 'eard 'em let on 'ow valuable it was, I says to myself, I says, 'Enery Dixon, I says, the party as restores that to Mrs. Pomfret will 'ave a claim to a pretty tidy reward, I says.

Re-enter PEDDER, L.C., ushering in INSPECTOR GLIMMER.

DIXON down L.C.

PED. This way, if you please, sir; missus said as you was to be shown into her boodore directly you arrived. (*knocks at door, R.*) Inspector Glimmer, please'm! (*opens door; GLIMMER turns and looks at DIXON, then exits, R.*)

DIXON. 'Oo did you say? (*up stage, C.*)

PED. (*crossing him to door*) Inspector Glimmer, of the Criminal Investigation Department.

DIXON. A detective? (*agitated*)

PED. (*stopping*) Yes. Bless me, Your Majesty, how pale you look! I'ope you 'aven't been putting the Crown Jewels up the spout. (*Exit, L.C.*)

DIXON. What does this here mean? (*crosses to door R. and listens*) They're talking of the missing paper. (*listens*) The stolen paper they call it. Supposing as I gives it up to Mrs. Pomfret, and says as 'ow I found it, as was my intention, will they believe me? It's werry doubtful, and I don't mean to risk it. I wish I 'adn't touched the beastly thing; I wish I could get rid of it. I will, too! This'll do fust-rate! (*slips the recipe underneath circulars on table.* NOTE.—*The circulars should all be white—so as to contrast with the recipe which is on blue paper, and in a blue envelope—and made up flat and not too thick, so as to admit of their lying easily one on top of the other. The door R. opens and MRS. POMFRET and GLIMMER enter. DIXON up stage, L.C.*

MRS. P. (*sitting L. of table, R.C.*) And so you've no clue as yet, Mr. Inspector?

GLIM. (R.) No direct clue, ma'am, but the field of investigation is narrowing. I have satisfied myself that the letter never reached the district post-office, so that the loss, or theft, or whatever it may be, probably lies between the post-man who cleared the pillar-box and——(*suddenly catching sight of DIXON*) Who are you?

MRS. P. (*looking round*) Oh, it's only Dixon. What is it, Dixon?

DIXON. (*coming down C. GLIMMER goes up, R.C., and pretends to examine picture on wall*) A note, ma'am. (*giving letter*)

MRS. P. (*opens and reads*) "Pleasure of your company at dinner to-day, eight o'clock, to meet the Busbys and Captain Kirby." From Mr. Baskerville? (*surprised*)

DIXON. Yes, ma'am, Mrs. Baskerville was a trifle indisposed this morning. (*aside*) Indisposed to take the trouble to write.

MRS. P. (*aside*) H'm, what's she up to now, I wonder? (*to DIXON*) I'll write an answer at once.

DIXON. Ho, no occasion, ma'am, a *verbal* answer will do for Mr. Baskerville. (*contemptuously*)

MRS. P. Oh, very well, say I'll come with pleasure.

DIXON. And Captain Kirby's compliments, ma'am, and are you at home to him this morning?

MRS. P. Certainly. (*aside*) What does this mean? (*aloud*) Is he staying with Mr. Baskerville?

DIXON. No, ma'am, at the Charing Cross Hotel, where I 'ave just took 'im an invite to make our 'ouse 'is 'ome for a few days. 'E arsk it as a favour, if I would bring the message to you, ma'am.

MRS. P. I see. Good morning, Dixon.

DIXON. Good morning, ma'am. (*going L.C.; is followed by GLIMMER, who taps him on the shoulder*)

GLIM. Dixon ?

DIXON. (*facing round*) Yes, sir ?

GLIM. Mr. Baskerville's servant ?

DIXON. Yes, sir.

GLIM. Certain you posted that letter ?

DIXON. Ye'es, sir.

GLIM. Not quite certain ?

DIXON. Ye'es, sir.

GLIM. Good memory ?

DIXON. Middling, sir.

GLIM. Long with Mr. Baskerville ?

DIXON. Thirty years in the family, sir.

GLIM. Never been found out ?

DIXON. An exemplary character always, sir.

GLIM. H'm, same thing differently expressed. (*to Mrs. POMFRET*) Your servant, ma'am. I'll report to you immediately anything turns up.

MRS. P. Very good, Mr. Inspector, good-morning !

GLIM. (*crosses DIXON to door L.C., then turns and takes him by the chin, turning his face up*) No offence, Dixon, but when I do come across an exemplary character I like to have a look at it.

DIXON. Well, I'm sure, sir, I 'opes you'll know me again.

GLIM. You may take your oath of that, Dixon. (*Exit, L.C.*)

MRS. POMFRET *has watched the little scene with an amused expression ; she now takes up the tradesmen's circulars, together with the recipe, which is at the bottom.*

DIXON. (*aside*) Which his heyes is gimlets ! (*catches sight of Mrs. POMFRET slowly looking at the circulars in turn, and stands spellbound with anxiety*) 'Evings ! If she finds it now, she'll suspect the 'and I've 'ad in it. (*comes down a little, L.C.*)

MRS. P. Circular, circular, circular, what a lot of these things one gets to be sure ! (*she has got to within one of the recipe, when DIXON can stand it no longer, and upsets a chair. Mrs. POMFRET starts*) Goodness, Dixon, how you startled me ; I thought you had gone. (*jumbles all the circulars and recipe together, rises and crosses L., and throws them into rubbish basket*)

DIXON. Just a-going, ma'am. (*aside*) And thankful I am to 'ook it ! (*takes hat, and exits L.C.*)

MRS. P. Well, I suppose I must make up my mind that the recipe has gone for good ; in that case, the only way in which I can benefit from the Pontifex property is by declaring myself, and that means conjugal slavery again. I suppose I shall have to do it. I must get rid of Captain Kirby first, though. Goodness, he'll be here directly. (*crosses to fireplace*)

and rings) I must go and think how I'm to conduct the campaign ; it won't do to be unprepared.

Enter PEDDER, L.C.

PED. Did you ring, ma'am ? (*c. up stage*)

MRS. P. (*crossing to door, L.C.*) Yes. I'm going up to my room for a little while ; if Captain Kirby comes, ask him to wait. (*Exit, L.C.*)

PED. Yes'm. (*crossing to fireplace*) Well, to be sure, to think of a slap-up gent like Captain Kirby taking a fancy to the missus ! Now, if he'd taken a fancy to the maid (*looking at herself in the chimney-glass*)—but there's no accounting for tastes. (*listening*) Someone coming upstairs. (*runs to door, L.C., opens it and admits* CAPTAIN KIRBY) Oh, Captain Kirby, missus 'ave just gone upstairs, sir, but I was to ask you to wait.

TOM. (*coming down, L., very much preoccupied*) All right ! (*sits L.*)

PED. (*R. of him*) 'Opes you won't find it dull till she comes, sir. (*coquettishly*)

TOM. No, no, don't bother !

PED. (*aside*) Bother, indeed ! 'E ain't got much taste ! (*Exit, L.C.*)

TOM. I must unravel this mystery, and put an end to this ridiculous engagement. What's the key to the situation, I wonder ? Well, I must find out, or force the lock.

ENTER BASKERVILLE, L.C.

BASK. (*c.*) Ah, here you are !

TOM. How did you find your way up ?

BASK. Oh, they know me here. I occupied this very apartment for a week on my return from India, while they were airing my bed at home.

TOM. Well, what's up ?

BASK. (*crossing R. and sitting*) Well, the fact is, that just after you went out I mentioned to my wife that I had invited you to stay with us—she gave a loud scream and fainted.

TOM. Dear, me, I'm very sorry.

BASK. When she came to, she explained it. She admitted that there had been an episode in her life which she had not confided to me.

TOM. (*laughing*) Ha ! ha ! Of course.

BASK. Eh ?

TOM. I mean, You don't say so ?

BASK. Yes, it appears that before she knew me she was en-

gaged to be married to a man named Kirby, with a cork leg. By the way (*looking at Tom's legs*), you haven't——?

TOM. No, they're all right.

BASK. However, it was broken off.

TOM. What, the leg?

BASK. No, the engagement. You see, Maria is romantic, and Love's young dream was shattered when she found he had lost his leg, not on the field of battle, as she had fondly supposed, but by falling down a cellar flap in Seven Dials. Naturally, your name awoke painful reminiscences, so I thought I'd follow you, and explain how it is that I must withdraw my invitation. (*both rise*)

TOM. Oh, all right. Then I'm not to come to dinner to-night?

BASK. Oh, yes! Though I very much doubt if Mrs. Baskerville will be well enough to appear. A delicate plant, my dear Kirby—a delicate plant!

TOM. I'm sorry to hear it. (*aside, down L.C.*) It's very odd. I've not yet seen Mrs. Baskerville, and now when we were on the point of meeting, my namesake with a cork leg gets in the way. (*aloud*) By the way, Baskerville, how did you know I was here?

BASK. (c.) Where should I look for you but in the abode of her——

TOM. (L. of him) Now, look here, drop that nonsense.

BASK. Nonsense?

TOM. I've already told you that the Mrs. Pomfret I met on board the *Irrawaddy* is not this Mrs. Pomfret.

BASK. Really?

TOM. Really!

BASK. Then someone must have assumed her name.

TOM. That is what I've been thinking; but, then, how is it that this Mrs. Pomfret knows all I said to the other Mrs. Pomfret?

BASK. There must be collusion between them; possibly this Mrs. Pomfret is shielding the other from the result of an indiscretion.

TOM. (*the truth dawning on him*) It is possible. (*aside, down L.C.*) Good Heavens! I see it all; no wonder Mrs. Baskerville keeps out of my way!

BASK. I say, that other one must be a warm member.

TOM. Yes. (L. of him)

BASK. What I regret is that Maria was so ill all the time, or she'd have been able to tell us all about it.

TOM. Yes, she'd have been able to do that.

BASK. I say, what are you going to do about Mrs. Pomfret?

TOM. Which ?

BASK. This.

TOM. I don't know.

BASK. Now, I should recommend you to marry her, if the recipe turns up. By the way, it's very remarkable where that document can have got to.

TOM. You needn't complain if it's lost, for in that case the property goes to you and Busby. (*down L.*)

BASK. (*C.*) And I confess that I should look on its loss as a providential interposition in favour of right and justice ; but I feel convinced it will be found.

TOM. Why, have you got it ? (*carelessly*)

BASK. (*down L.R. of TOM*) No, have you ? (*with meaning*)

TOM. What do you mean ? (*turning on him*)

BASK. My dear boy, I'm a man of the world.

TOM. (*threateningly*) You're likely to be a man of the next world if you don't mind.

BASK. (*retreating, C.*) I should mind very much. Seriously, did you ever part with that paper ?

TOM. (*following him*) So you suspect me of suppressing it ? With what object, pray ?

BASK. Well, Mrs. Pomfret will doubtless be very anxious to recover it.

TOM. And you think I have put it in my pocket with the intention of levying blackmail on her ? Why, you despicable little rascal—— ! (*advancing on him*)

BASK. (*retreating, R.C., up stage, and putting chair between them*) Captain Kirby, do not tempt me to strike you.

TOM. Strike me ! I tell you what it is, Baskerville, I've a great mind to kick you !

BASK. Upon my word, sir ! (*this is an exclamation, not a question*)

TOM. No, Baskerville, not upon your word.

BASK. (*drawing chair back, and sitting down*) I defy you, sir !

TOM. How dare you insult me by such an insinuation ? (*down C.*)

BASK. You have misunderstood me. I merely meant to suggest that Mrs. Pomfret might be inclined to give you your liberty in exchange for the recipe.

TOM. By Jove, that would be fair enough. Only, unluckily, I haven't the recipe. Baskerville, perhaps I was a little brusque just now, but——(*advancing and holding out his hand ; BASKERVILLE who has risen, sits again hastily*)

BASK. Captain Kirby, you have hurt my feelings ; you would have hurt more than my feelings had I not been inspired to take precautions ; but I don't wish to bear malice, so there. (*shakes hands*) And now (*rising*), I must be off.

Good-bye ! Take my advice, go in for the blessed state of matrimony ! (*going L.C.*)

TOM. (*down R.C.*) Do you think it is blessed ?

BASK. Oh, yes, with a wife like my Maria ; but she's one in a thousand. (*Exit, L.C.*)

TOM. Thank heaven for that !

Re-enter BASKERVILLE.

BASK. (*coming down c.*) There's that old ass, Busby, coming upstairs. I really cannot stand him, he always thinks I'm a barber. (*going to door L.*)

TOM. Where are you going ? (*following him*)

BASK. Into this room here. (*pointing to door, L.*)

TOM. But you can't get out that way ?

BASK. Can't I ? I tell you I know these rooms. There's a door leading from that room on to the back stairs. (*Exit, L.*)

Enter PEDDER, ushering in BUSBY and NELLY, L.C.

PED. (*to NELLY*) Mrs. Pomfret will be here directly, miss. (*Exit L.C.*)

BUS. (*coming down, c., NELLY R. of him*) Good morning, sir, I just stepped in on a little matter of business.

TOM. (*L., shaking hands with him, and anxious to get past him to NELLY*) Oh, yes, I know.

BUS. Do you, that's lucky, because, oddly enough, it had quite slipped my memory. (*TOM keeps trying to pass him but BUSBY keeps up a corresponding movement, NELLY following suit*)

TOM. Yes, you think I'm the hairdresser, but I'm not ; but you'll find his address in the Directory on the writing-table. (*dodges past him and goes to NELLY*)

BUS. (*bewildered*) I'm very much obliged to you. (*goes to writing-table, L., where he sits ; takes his hat off and puts it on the table, and begins to examine Directory, which puzzles him dreadfully*)

NELLY. (*R.C.*) You are surprised to see me ?

TOM. (*L. of her*) Well, rather. (*they talk aside*)

BASK. (*appearing at door L. ; aside*) The door on to the back stairs is locked—I am a prisoner till Busby goes (*BUSBY sees him. Exit BASKERVILLE, L.*)

BUS. (*amused*) I wonder what they're playing at ?

NELLY. I was determined to have it out with Mrs. Pomfret, so I told my father the hairdresser lived here.

TOM. But haven't you had my letter explaining my entanglement with Mrs. Pomfret ?

NELLY. Yes.

TOM. And are you not satisfied

NELLY. How can I be satisfied when I find you in that woman's clutches? (*crosses L.*)

TOM. Then you do care?

NELLY. Care!

TOM. Yes, who clutches me

NELLY. Yes, if you do.

TOM. (C.) If? Come here! (*she comes up to him*) I'll tell you something. I hate Mrs. Pomfret!

NELLY. That's very naughty.

TOM. And I love you!

NELLY. That's very nice!

TOM. Say it again.

NELLY. I love you—no—you said that. I said—what did I say?

TOM. That it was nice.

NELLY. So it is.

TOM. Let us clutch! (*they clutch*)

NELLY. (L. of TOM) Oh, Tom, how happy we should be if it wasn't for Mrs. Pomfret!

TOM. We'll find a way to get rid of her. Let me see, let me see! (*cogitates deeply*)

BUSBY gives Directory up as a bad job, and, rising, goes up stage, C., with it under his arm; he is brought up short by TOM and NELLY. They take no notice of him, and he suddenly descries TOM's hand resting on NELLY's shoulder, his arm being round her neck. BUSBY follows the hand and arm up till he gets to TOM's face.

BUS. (L. of them) I beg pardon, but is this yours? (*lifting TOM's hand. NELLY starts as if to move away*)

TOM. (to her, aside) Keep still; we'll brazen it out. (to BUSBY, absently, looking at his own hand without removing his arm) Yes, that's mine.

BUS. It seems a pity to leave it about, doesn't it?

NELLY. Hush, papa, he's thinking.

BUS. What's he thinking about?

NELLY. He's thinking—where the hairdresser lives.

BUS. Does he usually think with his arm?

NELLY. Oh, papa, you shouldn't talk like that when he's trying to help you!

BUS. He appears to be helping himself.

TOM. Eh? What?

BUS. I was asking if you usually thought with your arm?

TOM. The fact is, Mr. Busby, that whenever I think hard I always have to catch hold of something—or somebody—somebody for choice, on account of the electricity.

BUS. Is that so? (TOM bows; BUSBY puts Directory on

floor, removes TOM's arm from NELLY, comes between them, and puts TOM's arm round his neck) Then now think away!

Enter PEDDER, L.C. ; she beckons TOM, who at first doesn't see her.

TOM. It's no use, you've no electricity. (*down R.*)

BUS. I don't know anything about that, but (*aside*) I know it takes a good deal to shock me. (*picks up Directory and goes L., NELLY R. of him*)

TOM. (*catching sight of PEDDER*) What's the matter? (*to BUSBY and NELLY*) Excuse me, one minute. (*goes up to PEDDER, C., at back ; BUSBY and NELLY, L., in front*) Now, what is it?

PED. (*L. of TOM ; aside*) There's a lady to see you.

TOM. (*aside*) Hush! To see me? I can't see her here. What would Mrs. Pomfret say?

PED. (*aside*) Oh, she's curling her fringe, you've plenty of time.

TOM. (*aside*) But what am I to do with them? (*pointing to BUSBY and NELLY*)

PED. (*aside*) I'll manage that. (*coming down, C., to NELLY*) Would you and your pa mind stepping into the library, miss? Mrs. Pomfret will see you there. (*points to door, R.U.E.*)

NELLY. (*aside*) This is mysterious. (*crosses to door, R.U.E.*)

PED. Now, sir, please. (*takes BUSBY's arm to induce him to follow NELLY ; he walks right round PEDDER, and returns to table, L., where he puts his hat on, and takes Directory under his arm. TOM and NELLY have meantime been talking and spooning up stage, R. PEDDER again tries to take BUSBY's arm ; he shakes hands with her, she pushes him back towards door, R.U.E., where he bumps against TOM. NELLY jumps back to door, R.U.E. BUSBY shakes hands with TOM, who twists him round to door. NELLY kisses her hand to TOM ; TOM down, R.C., returns it. BUSBY amused*)

BUS. They're thinking again. (*Exeunt NELLY and BUSBY, R.U.E., and PEDDER, L.C.*)

TOM. (*down R.*) Now, who on earth can this be?

Enter MRS. BASKERVILLE, L.C. TOM advances L. of occasional table. She goes abruptly up to TOM, falls on her knees, and seizes his hands. NOTE.—It is very important that MRS. BASKERVILLE should wear a long, loose, black cloak, entirely concealing her dress and figure, and a black veil, thick enough to prevent her features being distinguished.

TOM. Good gracious, ma'am, what's the matter? Pray get up ; suppose anyone should come? (*he raises her tenderly*)

BASK. (*peeping out, L.*) I wonder if Busby has gone? (*sees the state of affairs and disappears abruptly*)

MRS. B. (*L. of Tom*) Captain Kirby, don't you recognise me

TOM. That voice—can it be——? (*she raises her veil*)

MRS. B. No, Captain Kirby, don't say it, that is not my real name.

TOM. I know it only too well, Mrs. Baskerville. But are you aware that Mrs. Pomfret has claimed from me the fulfilment of an offer I made to you?

MRS. B. Yes, I know it. Bear with her, Captain Kirby, humour her in this little fancy; for my sake, humour her!

TOM. Humour her! Really, even for your sake, I cannot consent to become Mr. Pomfret—I should say to make her Mrs. Kirby.

BUSBY *enters from R.U.E., with the open Directory in his hand; he comes down a few steps but suddenly sees the state of affairs and beats a rapid retreat.*

MRS. B. You can't? Then, sir, the least you can do is to restore her property.

TOM. The recipe? I haven't got it, and don't know where it is.

MRS. B. Is this true? Ah, I see it is; the recipe is lost, and so am I! (*crossing R.*)

TOM. Why, ma'am?

MRS. B. (*turning quickly on him*) Why, sir, Mrs. Pomfret holds me responsible for it, and its recovery is the price of her silence.

TOM. Ah! About the *Irrawaddy*?

MRS. B. Just so. You must admit, Captain Kirby, that it would not be difficult for her to find conversation on that subject.

TOM. Yes, there's material for a few remarks, certainly. Don't you think it was rather shabby of you to make such a fool of me?

MRS. B. Captain Kirby, I was so dull!

TOM. Well, the result is likely to be pretty lively, especially if Baskerville should smell a rat.

MRS. B. The thought almost makes me faint! Joseph is the most suspicious, the most jealous of husbands; an Othello in everything but colour.

TOM. Then you'll have all your work cut out to keep him in the dark.

MRS. B. It will require diplomacy.

TOM. And a lot of lies.

MRS. B. That's what I mean. You'll help me, won't you

TOM. Well, really, I'm not a particularly good liar!

MRS. B. Aren't you? I find it so easy! (MRS. POMFRET'S voice heard outside)

MRS. P. Very well, Pedder, but I must see Captain Kirby first.

MRS. B. Mrs. Pomfret's voice! I cannot meet her reproachful eye! (*puts her veil over her face*) Can't I get away somehow? (*runs to door, R.U.E.*)

TOM. (*stopping her*) Not that way! (*bringing her down, c. Aside*) Nelly might require an explanation.

MRS. B. How then?

TOM. Through here. (*leading her to door, L.*) There's a door beyond on to the back stairs. (*Exit MRS. BASKERVILLE, L.*)

Enter MRS. POMFRET, L.C.

TOM. (L.C.) Ah! My Amelia, this is indeed a pleasure! (*gloomily, and turning away L.*)

MRS. P. (*aside; after considering him for a moment*) The French always say an Englishman takes his pleasure sadly. (*coming down, c.*) I'm glad you think so, Captain Kirby.

TOM. Captain Kirby! Why so cold, Amelia?

MRS. P. Because you do not love me; do not deny it, it is useless, and I here release you from your engagement! (*down R.*)

TOM. (*aside*) What does she mean by this? I think I'll spoil her little game, whatever it is. (*up to L.C.*) Do you mean that we must part? (*with pretended agitation*)

MRS. P. Yes! (*he pretends to stagger and holds on to chair*)

TOM. Ah!

MRS. P. (*up to R.C., uneasy*) What's the matter?

TOM. Oh, Mrs. Pomfret! Oh, Amelia! Your words are my deathblow!

MRS. P. (c., *half angry and half puzzled to know what he's up to*) What? Do you mean to say you do love me?

Enter NELLY, R.U.E.; she stands thunderstruck.

TOM. (*crossing to L. of MRS. POMFRET, putting his arm round her waist and seizing her hand*) Love you! Oh, Heavens! That you should doubt it!

MRS. P. (c., *struggling*) But you said that you only loved me at a distance?

TOM. (*holding on*) Pardon me, I said that distance increased my love to a fatal extent, and therefore, Amelia, do not say you do not love me, for I dare not leave you! (*she attempts to free herself all the time*)

MRS. P. (*aside*) The wretch! What does he mean by this? (*to TOM*) Oh, Captain Kirby, I don't know what to say to you!

NELLY. (*coming down, c.*) Then I will tell you. (*they start apart*) Say to him that he is the basest and falsest of men; that he is making a fool of you as he has made a fool of me, and that he had better make the best of you, for he has lost me for ever! (*goes up stage*)

MRS. POMFRET, R., NELLY C., *at back*; TOM, L., *by writing-table*. A shriek is heard; door L. bursts open and MRS. BASKERVILLE rushes across the stage to R.C., *up stage*.

MRS. B. (*turning and facing TOM*) Oh, you villain! (*tears veil off*)

MRS. P. & } Mrs. Baskerville!
NELLY. }

MRS. B. The door on to the back stairs was locked! (*goes up to door L.C.* NELLY follows her)

TOM. Locked! (*rushing and putting his back against door L., preventing BASKERVILLE coming out; aside*) Then Baskerville's there! (*with his back to door L., at which BASKERVILLE is pushing from without*) Ladies, dear ladies, hear me. Nelly! Amelia! Maria! I implore!

ALL THREE. Wretch! (*Exeunt MRS. POMFRET, R.; MRS. BASKERVILLE and NELLY, L.C.*)

TOM. Gone! (*he relaxes his efforts and is immediately shot into the middle of the stage by BASKERVILLE, who shoves open door L. and enters*)

BASK. (*carried across stage to C. by his own impetus*) I say, what's up?

TOM. (*rushing to door L.C., and standing before it*) Baskerville! Stay where you are! You shall do nothing rash! (NOTE.—*The action from MRS. BASKERVILLE'S entrance to this point must be very quick*)

BASK. (*laughing*) Ha! ha! ha! You object to my poaching on your preserves, eh?

TOM. My preserves! (*astonished*)

BASK. Yes, you gay Lothario, you; I saw her kneeling to you in a beautiful attitude of supplication, and noticed how tenderly you raised her. (*action of raising tenderly*)

TOM. (*coming down L. of him*) Did—did you speak to her in there? (*jerking his thumb towards door L.*)

BASK. Rather! But I couldn't get a word from her, until I tried to raise her veil, when she gave that awful shriek.

TOM. (*aside, down L.C.*) Thank goodness! He didn't recognise her. (*aloud, turning to BASKERVILLE*) Understand me, Baskerville, that lady is nothing to me.

BASK. You surprise me ! For as far as I could judge, she seemed a very charming person.

TOM. Oh, you thought that ?

BASK. Yes. And as she's nothing to you, I've a great mind to improve the acquaintance. Look here, she dropped her handkerchief. (*producing it*) What a delicate perfume, and a most elegant monogram. Let me see, what is it ? "B.M." I wonder what "B.M." stands for ?

TOM. Bogey Man !

BASK. No, hang it ! Something more romantic than that. What do you say to Beatrice Montmorency ?

TOM. Nothing. What do you think your wife would say to her ?

BASK. I don't know. To tell the truth, I hadn't thought of asking her.

TOM. Oh, Baskerville, you're a bad lot !

BASK. My conduct may not be quite according to Cocker, but if you only knew how humdrum married life is !

TOM. Remember you have a character to lose.

BASK. Yes, and if I could only lose it quietly, and without attracting attention, it would be such a relief. I think I'll go and try. She went this way, I believe. (*crosses TOM towards door L.C.*)

TOM. Oh, Baskerville ! Baskerville ! (*seizes him to prevent him going, and they have a slight friendly struggle*)

BASK. My dear fellow, you have no idea how dull it is to be so beastly respectable ! (*Exit, L.C.*)

TOM. (*coming down*) Well, here's a nice kettle of fish ! (*sits, L.*) I've managed to get myself disliked all round. I suppose I must throw up the sponge. No, I won't. (*rising*) I'll have another try to get back into Nelly's good graces, so here goes ! (*Exit, L.C.*)

Enter BUSBY, R.U.E. He comes down L.C. in a perplexed manner.

BUS. It seems to me I've lost something. Is it the Directory ? Now, where did I put that Directory ? (*feels in waistcoat and trousers pockets*) Oh, here it is ! (*it is under his arm*) Or my hat ? (*feeling*) No, that's all right. By the way, I must get this hat to fit better. Let me see, let me see. (*he sits down, L.C., and takes rubbish basket which he empties on to the floor*) Aha ! The very things, tradesmen's circulars ! (*he tries one in the lining of his hat*) Too thick. (*then another*) Too thin. (*he then takes the recipe in its long, blue envelope*) Very nearly the thing. (*he takes it out again and strips the envelope off, then replaces it*) Aha ! That's it !

(*he then begins to pick up the circulars and replace them in the basket ; as he is doing so, MRS. POMFRET enters, R.*)

MRS. P. (*aside*) My worthy husband ! What is he up to, I wonder ? Oh, of course, he's come for Nelly. (*aloud*) Ah, Mr. Busby, how do you do, I can guess what brings you here. (*crossing to R. of him*)

BUS. Can you ? I wish I could.

MRS. P. Why, have you not come for your daughter ?

BUS. (*rising*) Aha ! I knew I had lost something, and I couldn't think what it was. By the way, it wasn't you who advertised the hair restorer ?

MRS. P. Mr. Busby !

BUS. No, of course it wasn't, but you see, I'm naturally anxious on the subject, that's what made me forget Nelly.

MRS. P. Ah, Mr. Busby, I fear you think more of your hair than your daughter.

BUS. Yes, and that's very odd, isn't it ? For I've much more daughter than hair. Anyhow, I'm glad she's found. (*he goes round the room, looking under the sofa, behind window curtains, &c. MRS. POMFRET sits L.C.*)

MRS. P. (*aside*) Poor old Jack ! Nelly is much too flighty to look after him properly. Let me think ; the recipe is lost, he is co-heir with Mr. Baskerville to the Pontifex property. I'm very lonely, I've a great mind to apply for restitution of conjugal rights.

BUS. (R.) Where did you say you had put her ? (*looks up chimney*)

MRS. P. (C.) Her ? Who ?

BUS. My daughter.

MRS. P. (*laughing*) Well, you wouldn't expect to find her up the chimney, would you ? (*rising*)

BUS. I shouldn't expect to, but she might be there all the same.

MRS. P. Don't you find your daughter a great responsibility ? I wonder you have never thought of marrying again, for her sake. (*coming up to sofa by fireplace*)

BUS. (*in front of fireplace*) I have thought of it, but decided not to do so—for my own.

MRS. P. (*sitting on sofa*) Let me see, your second wife died, I think, five years ago ?

BUS. I believe she did—Lor ! How that woman did disagree with me ! I often wonder if she disagreed with the crocodile. By the way, did you ever meet her ?

MRS. P. No, I never met her—I have seen her—(*aside*) in the looking-glass. We were considered rather alike.

BUS. Not a bit ! Now I consider you a most charming woman. (*sitting on sofa R. of her*)

MRS. P. And was not she ?

BUS. She ! Charming ! Oh lor !

MRS. P. (*aside*) I'll pay him out for this. Evidently it won't do to make myself known to him. I must try another tack. (*aloud*) I can't think how any woman could have failed to appreciate you, Mr. Busby.

BUS. Curious, ain't it ? (*aside*) I like this woman.

MRS. P. For I'm sure you must have made a model husband.

BUS. I was, I was !

MRS. P. And you would be again, I'm certain.

BUS. There's not a doubt of it. (*aside*) I fancy I've seen her before, somewhere.

MRS. P. Ah, I wish I had had a husband like that ! (*laying her hand on his*)

BUS. Yes, they're rather hard to find. (*taking her hand—aside*) Oh, she's a nice woman !

MRS. P. Who would have cherished me. (*putting her handkerchief to her eyes*)

BUS. Oh, he'd have been sure to do that.

MRS. P. (*sobbing*) Instead of a brute.

BUS. Oh, he was a brute, was he ? There, there, my dear, (*putting his arm round her waist*) Don't cry !

MRS. P. I can't help it, you're so good to me. (*lets her head fall on his shoulder*)

BUS. (*aside*) Oh, she is a nice woman !

Enter NELLY, L.C.; she takes in the situation at a glance, then comes down, L. of sofa.

NELLY. (*seizing BUSBY by the hand of the arm that is round MRS. POMFRET*) Papa, come home. (*to MRS. POMFRET, who is thus forced to rise*) As for you, are you not content to have stolen my lover that you must rob me of my father too ?

MRS. P. (L.C.) I don't want your lover, by which I presume you refer to that unprincipled person Kirby. (*crosses L. and sits*)

NELLY. He isn't unprincipled, and he isn't a person, he's a Captain. (*pulling old BUSBY up*)

MRS. P. Ah, my dear, you're partial to the young man.

NELLY. And so are you, and you're old enough to know better than to allow a boy like that to engage himself to you.

MRS. P. (*philosophically*) When you are old enough to know better, my dear, you'll think differently.

NELLY. Mrs. Pomfret, I—I—blush for you !

MRS. P. You're very considerate.

NELLY. I think I am, for I'm sure you couldn't do it for yourself.

MRS. P. Impertinence ! But, (*with a forced laugh*) ha ! ha ! ha ! I suppose I must make allowance for your being in love ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

All through above scene NELLY retains hold of BUSBY'S hand, and keeps pulling him up, who as often drops back again on to sofa. TOM enters, L.C.

NELLY. (*letting go of BUSBY, who falls back on sofa, and coming down, c.*) You think I'm ashamed of being in love, but I'm not ! I do love Tom—I mean Captain Kirby—I do, I do, I do, and that's why I've determined to hate him for ever ! (*bursts into tears*)

TOM. (*coming down L. of her*) Oh, Nelly, don't say that ! Hate me for a certain period if you must, say five minutes ; but after that return to your first love, for he loves you and you only !

NELLY. (*repulsing him and crossing him to c.*) No ; how can I believe you. With my own ears I heard you declare your passionate love for this eccentric female. (*TOM moves, R.C.*)

MRS. P. Eccentric female ! (*jumping up and moving L.C.*)

NELLY. With my own eyes I saw your arm encircle her waist. I'm not going halves with anyone in either your affections or your arm. My love for you is intense, but it is not selfish. (*going to TOM and seizing his right hand*) And it shall never be an obstacle to your happiness. (*goes to MRS. POMFRET, dragging TOM after her, and seizes MRS. POMFRET'S left hand*) Take her, Captain Kirby, take her. (*joining their hands ; she then goes up to BUSBY, who is very much perplexed and rather sleepy*)

TOM. (*disengaging himself from MRS. POMFRET*) But I don't want her ! Nelly, Miss Busby, pray hear me, it's all a delusion ! (*c.*)

MRS. P. Do you mean to insinuate that I'm a snare ?

TOM. Oh, bother ! It's all your fault ! (*down R.*)

MRS. P. (*L.*) You mean it's all her fault ! (*pointing to MRS. BASKERVILLE, who enters, L.C., but without cloak and veil*)

MRS. B. (*c.*) Mine ?

MRS. P. Of course, it all comes from your personating me on board the *Irrawaddy* ; for, I suppose, Captain Kirby, you have discovered that by now ?

TOM. Yes, it has dawned upon me.

MRS. B. I deny that I am responsible for the results of that amiable indiscretion.

MRS. P. Indeed ? Then may I ask to what you attribute it ?

MRS. B. To your weak and undue yielding to maritime influences. (*crosses R. ; TOM c.*)

TOM. (*to* MRS. POMFRET) That's very true ; a little self-restraint on your part, and you would have been able to come on deck. (*crosses R. ;* MRS. BASKERVILLE, C.)

MRS. B. And I should not have sat on the binnacle. (*crosses R. ;* TOM C.)

TOM. Nor I.

MRS. P. So my indisposition is to make the excuse for your glaring impropriety ? I never heard such barefaced impudence !

TOM. (C.) It's no use bandying words. What is to be done ?

MRS. P. I shall make a clean breast of it. (*goes up a little*)

MRS. B. If you do that, what is to become of me ? (*crossing C. ;* TOM R.C.)

MRS. P. I can't help that. I've been a martyr to sentiment long enough. (*down L.*)

MRS. B. I implore you don't let it get to Mr. Baskerville's ears ! Ah ! That reminds me of what I returned for. I dropped a handkerchief in that room. (*pointing to door L.*)

TOM. And your husband picked it up. But it's all right, he didn't recognise it as yours.

Enter BASKERVILLE, L.C., with the handkerchief in his hand ; his hair is dishevelled, and his looks wild. TOM R.C. ; MRS. BASKERVILLE crosses L. to MRS. POMFRET ; they both go up L.

BASK. (*coming down C., like the Commendatore in "Don Giovanni," and beckoning TOM, who goes to him*) A word with you, sir. You recognise this handkerchief ?

MRS. POMFRET and MRS. BASKERVILLE *steal right up stage, L. NELLY calls BUSBY'S attention to what is going on.*

TOM. (*R. of BASKERVILLE*) Ye'es, belongs to Miss Beatrice Montmorency, doesn't it ?

BASK. No, sir, it does not. The initials are not "B.M.," as I supposed, but "M.B.," and "M.B." stands for Maria Baskerville !

MRS. B. (*aside to MRS. POMFRET*) He has recognised it.

MRS. P. (*aside*) Serve you right !

TOM. Nonsense ! what makes you think that ?

BASK. Because, sir, I have discovered the rest of the half dozen of which this is one, in my wife's wardrobe.

TOM. Well, but what has it to do with me ?

BASK. (*with a frenzied laugh*) He ! he ! Nothing, of course. Who was the veiled female whom I saw kneeling to you in beautiful attitude of entreaty, and whom you raised so

tenderly? Whom you subsequently put into that room, and who dropped this handkerchief there—who was it, I say?

BUSBY, *urged by NELLY, comes down between them.*

BUS. Hullo! What's the matter!

TOM *turns away and goes up stage to NELLY, R.C., who turns her back on him.*

BASK. (L. of BUSBY) Oh, Busby, that villain Kirby has struck a blow at my domestic happiness!—Maria!

BUS. Did he strike her?

BASK. No! There has been no personal violence. No, Busby, when the wife of your bosom mistakes another's bosom for yours, the blow is moral!

BUS. Deuced immoral, I should say. (*goes up and sits on sofa*)

BASK. And falls on the unhappy husband! (*sits, L.C.*)

Enter DIXON, L.C.; he comes down R. of BASKERVILLE.

DIXON. 'Ere's a telegram for you. I thought I had better bring it on. (*gives telegram and goes up to C. at back*)

MRS. B. (*aside up L.*) Oh, Amelia, what will happen?

MRS. P. (*aside*) Ah! I wouldn't be in your shoes for something!

MRS. B. (*aside*) I don't care. If Joseph makes a fuss, I've got a Roland for his Oliver.

BASK. (*reads*) "To Baskerville, 120, Westbourne Park. Waggstaffe went to town this morning re Pontifex will. Wigsby, Bristol." (*rises, crosses R., and hands it to BUSBY, who studies it gravely*)

DIXON. Hany hanswer?

Enter GLIMMER, L.C.

BASK. No. (*standing R., gloomily, arms folded, his back to MRS. BASKERVILLE*)

DIXON. (*aside*) Oh! Got the 'ump! (*looking scornfully at BASKERVILLE*)

GLIM. Ahem! (*they all turn*) Excuse me, ladies.

MRS. P. You have news for me? (*coming down, L.*)

GLIM. Yes, ma'am. We have discovered the thief. (*DIXON begins to sidle off up to door, L.C.*)

BASK. (R.) Ah! the postman?

GLIM. (*with an eye on DIXON*) No, sir, not the postman. The thief was an individual of exemplary character. Henry Dixon! (*seizing him*) You are my prisoner!

DIXON. (*falling on his knees*) Mercy! Mercy! I confess I did take it!

BASK. Dixon!

DIXON. But I didn't mean to steal it, only to keep it a bit, till a reward was offered.

MRS. P. Where is it?

DIXON. I got frightened, and when I was here this morning I put it among some circulars as was on this table!

MRS. P. Among those circulars? Why, I threw them into that rubbish basket! (*all but DIXON and BUSBY rush L.C., put rubbish basket on chair and rummage it. BUSBY studying telegram on sofa. DIXON rises and stands L., at back*)

BASK. (*examining*) It's not among them now.

MRS. P. Stay, though, what's this? The envelope—but the contents—gone! (*all back to previous places*)

BASKERVILLE R.; BUSBY on sofa; NELLY and TOM behind sofa up stage R.; DIXON up stage L.; GLIMMER C.; MRS.

BASKERVILLE L., behind writing-table; MRS. POMFRET L., in front.

GLIM. (C.) Think, ma'am. Who has been in this room since?

MRS. P. (L.) Let me see. (*calls*) Pedder!

Enter PEDDER, L.C.

PED. Did you call 'm?

GLIM. (*to MRS. POMFRET*) Your maid, ma'am? Will you allow me? Now, Miss Pedder, did you—?

PED. (*L. of him*) No, sir, I didn't, I never touched it!

GLIM. Never touched what?

PED. The rubbish basket!

GLIM. (*taking her by the ear and pretending to examine it*) Got a earache, haven't you?

PED. No, sir.

GLIM. You will if you don't take care, those keyholes are nasty draughty things. (*releases her*)

PED. Such treatment from the Force! Well, I never! (*Exit, L.C.*)

MRS. P. Ah! I have it! (*crosses to L. of BUSBY, who is sitting calmly, R., with his hat on*) Mr. Busby! (*GLIMMER crosses L.C.*)

BUS. I beg your pardon?

MRS. P. I saw him, Mr. Inspector, a short while ago, exploring the contents of that basket. (*pointing to rubbish basket, L.*)

GLIM. Now, sir, what have you to say? (*advancing a little to BUSBY*)

BUS. What should I have to say—unless—(*looking at him doubtfully*) You're not the hairdresser who—

GLIM. Now, no nonsense, sir. A valuable paper has been lost ; by accident it was thrown into that basket. You were seen rummaging the basket.

BUS. You don't mean to say the prescription is lost ?

GLIM. No, because there is good reason to believe that it is in your possession.

MRS. P. So give it up at once.

BUS. My good lady, I haven't got it.

MRS. P. Haven't got it ?

BUS. No, and if I had, do you think I'd part with it ? Never !

MRS. P. You hear, Mr. Inspector, you hear ? Give it up this instant, you unprincipled old person !

NELLY. (*coming down to back of sofa*) How dare you speak to my father like that !

MRS. P. How dare I ? Because he's a swindler and no gentleman !

NELLY. He isn't !

MRS. P. He is !

NELLY. Prove it !

MRS. P. Would a gentleman sit with his hat on in the presence of ladies ? No ! And he shan't either ! He may rob me, but he shan't insult me ! (*snatches his hat and throws it out of the window*) There !

BUS. Ah, I remember !

ALL. What ?

BUS. The paper——!

ALL. Yes ! Yes !

BUS. Which I took from the basket——

ALL. Exactly. Go on !

BUS. Was blue.

ALL. (*exasperated*) But what did you do with it ?

BUS. Oh ! I put it in the lining of my hat !

They all, except BUSBY, rush to the window.

NELLY. There it is !

MRS. P. Where ? (*pulling her away*)

NELLY. Fallen on that omnibus !

BASK. I see ; it has knocked off the hat of a gentleman sitting on the knifeboard !

TOM. (*pulling BASKERVILLE away*) And his hat is smashed by a dust-cart !

NELLY (*pulling him away*) The gentleman puts papa's hat on !

TOM. (*looking over her shoulder*) And the bus goes on. Here ! Hi ! Stop ! (*they all scrimmage at the window and shout*)

MRS. P. They see us !

BASK. Not a bit of it !

MRS. B. They're stopping !

TOM. No they're not !

MRS. P. Yes they are !

Alternate cries of "No !" "Yes !" "No !"

ALL. Gone ! (*turning from window*)

During this last scene BUSBY has sat, telegram in hand, impervious to all surroundings.

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT II,

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Same as Act I. Everyone in evening dress except BASKERVILLE. BASKERVILLE sitting before fire, R. of fire-place, the picture of misery, with his face in his hands. DIXON standing L.C., looking at him.*

DIXON. (*aside, looking at BASKERVILLE, who takes no notice of him, and shrugging his shoulders*) Well, things has come to a pretty pass in this 'ouse. Mrs. B. goes hout this morning mysterious like ; comes 'ome an hour later, locks herself in 'er room, and sends word as Mr. B. will order dinner. I gives Mr. B. 'er message, but fail to rouse 'im to a sense of 'is social hobligations,—it's my opinion as 'e've gone a bit queer in 'is 'ead since the morning ; consequentially, 'ere it is 'alf-past seven, folks a-coming to dinner at eight, and no dinner ready. Ah, I knowed what 'ud come of a young wife. (*bell rings*) 'Ullo ! the front door bell. Who is it, I wonder. (*Exit, L.C.*)

BASK. (*without moving*) The villain, if I had him by the throat——

Re-enter DIXON, L.C., ushering in BUSBY and NELLY.

DIXON. Mr. and Miss Busby. (*BASKERVILLE takes no notice*)

BUS. (*to DIXON*) Is dinner ready ?

DIXON. 'Ardly, sir. The dinner *hour* is 8. (*Exit DIXON, C.*)

NELLY. There, papa, I told you so, but you would insist on starting so early.

BUS. (*coming down and sitting R. of writing-table*) Well, my dear, I like to be in time, especially as I haven't had a regular meal since breakfast. If it hadn't been for the remains of that cold goose——(*NELLY sits L. of writing-table*)

BASK. (*taking no notice of him*) By heavens, I'll tear him limb from limb. (*relapses*)

BUS. I did that ; in fact I left nothing but the back.

Enter DIXON, L.C., ushering in MRS. POMFRET.

DIXON. Mrs. Pomfret.

MRS. P. (*coming down, C. To BUSBY and NELLY*) Dear

me, I didn't expect to find you here yet. I came on early myself, to hear if there was any news for me, (BUSBY and NELLY *shake their heads*) but I see by your faces there isn't. You made inquiries about your hat?

BUS. Hat? (NELLY *whispers to him across table*)

MRS. P. Yes; I say, you have made inquiries?

BUS. Certainly, at the Home for Lost Foundlings at Battersea.

NELLY. No, papa, the Lost Property Office, Scotland Yard.

MRS. P. And then——?

BUS. Oh, then I had a snack. (*during above DIXON has been trying gingerly to attract BASKERVILLE'S attention to MRS. POMFRET*)

MRS. P. Pshaw! (*crosses, R., up stage to BASKERVILLE*) And you, Mr. Baskerville. (DIXON *ventures to shake him gently*)

BASK. (*jumping up and seizing DIXON by the collar*) Aha! at last I have you in my grip.

DIXON. Good gracious, Mr. Baskerville! Sir! you are choking me!

MRS. P. (*seizing BASKERVILLE*) Mr. Baskerville, what are you doing? It's Dixon.

BASK. (*releasing DIXON*) Dixon! (*looking vacantly round*)

MRS. P. Why, what's the matter with you?

BASK. (*resuming his seat and position*) I have been blighted, ma'am, badly blighted.

MRS. P. You look it. But there's no reason why you should blight Dixon. (*down, R.C.*)

DIXON. (L.C., *up stage*) That's what I says, ma'am. Of course I'm werry grateful to you, ma'am, and to you, sir, (*to BASKERVILLE*) for your kindness in overlooking my little haccident with that dockymment, werry grateful I am, but —— (*touching his neck tenderly*)

BASK. That'll do, Dixon, go and be grateful in the pantry. (*relapses*)

DIXON. Thank you, sir. (DIXON *exits, L.C.* MRS. POMFRET *looks round, then sits on sofa*)

MRS. P. (*aside*) This is lively. (*looking first at BASKERVILLE and then at BUSBY, who is nodding in his chair; looking at NELLY*) Poor child, how miserable she looks. I think I'll go and comfort her on the subject of her gallant captain. (*crosses to L., behind writing-table, and after a word or two with NELLY aside, they go off into conservatory*)

BASK. (*aside*) Oh, I will have such revenge on Kirby. (*looking slowly round, the sight of BUSBY inspires him with an idea*) Ha! (*rising*) I will attack him in this quarter first. (*crosses to BUSBY, stands over him, and taps him on the shoulder*) Busby! You have a daughter?

BUS. Yes, fine girl, ain't she ?

BASK. (R. of him) She is in love.

BUS. With you ?

BASK. No, sir, with Kirby—Captain Kirby.

BUS. Kirby !—let me see——(*producing notebook*)

BASK. You must put a stop to it, Busby, he's an abandoned scoundrel.

BUS. You're quite right, she has abandoned him. I made a note of it.

BASK. Aha ! She found him out. (*brings chair R. of BUSBY and sits*)

BUS. Yes, that he had carried on a violent flirtation with someone on board a ship.

BASK. I know, with Mrs. Pomfret.

BUS. No, that wasn't the name ; I should know it if I heard it.

BASK. Yes, yes, it was, a fine handsome widow.

BUS. No, she had a husband living, that was the amusing part of it.

BASK. I see. Was he in the joke ?

BUS. How could he be ?—he wasn't in the ship.

BASK. Not in the ship ! Where was he ?

BUS. Why, it appears that the old jackass came home by a previous steamer——

BASK. What ! Busby, was her name by any chance—— ? mind, I don't say it was—but was it—Ba, ba, ba ? (*choking*)

BUS. No, that wasn't it.

BASK. Baskerville ? (*rising, puts back chair*)

BUS. Baskerville ! You've hit it. (*rises*)

BASK. (*aside*) Then Kirby was the other chap ; and Maria ! (*crossing R.*)—Maria was the Amelia Pomfret of the *Irrawaddy*.

BUS. (C.) You didn't happen to know—— ?

BASK. The old jackass ? Slightly. But jackass or not, he doesn't mean to stand it. Busby ! I'll have revenge, I'll have his blood. Damme, I'll have a divorce.

Enter MRS. BASKERVILLE, L.C.

BUS. (C.) Whose blood ?

BASK. (R.) Kirby's !

MRS. B. (*coming down, L.C.*) And why a divorce ?

BASK. Oh, there you are, ma'am, are you ? Why a divorce ? You don't know, of course, oh, dear no. (*sternly*) I insist on an explanation of your conduct.

MRS. B. Bother ! (*turns away, L.*)

BUS. (C.) I think as you're going to be busy, I'll——(*turns to go up stage*)

BASK. (*detaining him*) No, stay ! and judge between us. Now, ma'am, you refuse to obey me. (*she shrugs her shoulders*) Then why did you marry me ?

MRS. B. Ah ! Why indeed ?

BASK. I will tell you. Because at that time it suited you to recognise my superior qualities.

MRS. B. Is age a quality ? In your case I should have called it a quantity.

BASK. (*blinking the question*) Then, ma'am, I was rich, while you—ha, ha ! Your face was your fortune !

MRS. B. Be thankful that yours was not, or you'd have been bankrupt long, long ago. Yes, Joseph, I was not blind to your personal defects when I married you, but I did hope I should find some compensation in your intellect,—I found none.

BUS. No compensation ?

MRS. B. No intellect.

BUS. Oh ! (*goes up R.C. and sits on sofa*)

During the above scene BUSBY listens to each in turn with the most puzzled attention.

BASK. Very good, ma'am, very good. (*TOM enters L.C. ushered in by DIXON, who is about to announce him when TOM stops him. Exit DIXON, L.C. ; TOM L.C. up stage*) And I presume it was in search of intellect that you flirted with Captain Kirby on board the *Irrawaddy*, and that you yesterday met him by appointment in Mrs. Pomfret's rooms ? Your tender reminiscences of his namesake with the cork leg don't seem to have lasted long.

MRS. B. (*aside, down, L.*) He does know all.

BASK. Ah, you are confused ! Come, how do you propose to explain those indelicate proceedings ?

MRS. B. (*turning*) As regards the *Irrawaddy* ?

TOM. (*coming down, C.*) The fault, if any, was entirely mine.

BASK. Of course, of course, go it ! (*R.C.*)

Re-enter MRS. POMFRET and NELLY from conservatory.

MRS. B. And our meeting at Mrs. Pomfret's was not by appointment.

MRS. P. No, Mr. Baskerville, I can answer for that. (*crosses with NELLY at back of writing-table to R.C. up stage*)

TOM. So can I.

BASK. Then why were you disguised ? Why, when you were alone with me, would you neither raise your veil nor speak ?

MRS. B. If you knew me (*crossing TOM to C., TOM down L.*) why did you not demand an explanation then and there ?

BASK. But I didn't know you then and there.

MRS. B. (*slowly*) Oh ! you didn't know me. Then that, I presume, was the reason you put your arm round my waist and attempted to kiss me. (*sensation*)

BASK. (*loftily*) Maria, this retort is ridiculous, you know I never did anything of the sort.

MRS. B. No, I said you only tried. (*laughing, goes up to door, L.C.*)

BASK. (*furiously*) I repeat, ma'am ——(*following her up a little*)

MRS. B. (*turning*) What ! Your invitation to me to go to supper with you to-night ? (*laughing*)

BASK. (*back to R.C., in front*) Absurd ! You will find it difficult to prove that assertion.

MRS. B. Shall I ? (*laughing*) Then what about this card ? (*holding out visiting card*)

BASK. (*aside*) That card ! I thought I had taken it back. (*feeling in his pockets*)

MRS. B. On which you wrote the time and place. (*reads*) "Cafe Imperial, 10.30." (*he goes up to her and tries to snatch it*) Take it ! take it ! take it ! (*flipping his nose with it, and finally throwing it at him*) It will do for someone else. (*Exit, L.C., with peals of laughter*)

BASKERVILLE comes down and collapses into chair R. of writing-table. All laugh except BUSBY, who sits R.C. rather bewildered, till he picks up card, when, after studying it a little, a grin appears on his face.

BUS. (*on sofa*) This little incident reminds me of how I once caught the butler kissing the cook.

BASK. I fail to see that that is a parallel case, sir.

Enter DIXON, L.C.

MRS. P. (*crossing to back of writing-table*) Oh, Mr. Baskerville, I wouldn't have believed it of you. (*to NELLY, who has followed her*) Come, my dear, we'll go and comfort poor Maria till dinner's ready.

DIXON. (*aside*) When will that be, I'd like to know.

BASK. Poor Maria ! Who's going to comfort me ? (*Exit MRS. POMFRET, L.C.*)

NELLY. (*at back of writing-table*) Who's going to comfort you, Mr. Baskerville ? Why, your excellent conscience, I should think.

BASK. Minx !

NELLY. (*aside to TOM, who is L. of writing-table*) Tom, dear Mrs. Pomfret has explained everything. I'll be in the conservatory in two minutes ; we shall have time for a nice talk before dinner. (*Exit, L.C.*)

DIXON. (*who overhears the last words*) More than they thinks for, poor things.

TOM. (*sitting on R. side of writing-table*) Ah, Baskerville ! I like your quiet way of losing your character. (*laughing*)

BASK. (*starting up*) How dare you address me, sir ? (C.)

TOM. A nice quiet place and hour you selected for losing it too. Café Imperial, 10.30. Oh, Baskerville, Baskerville, you'll be the death of me ! (*roaring with laughter. Exit, L., into conservatory*)

BASK. (*aside*) I should like to be.

DIXON. (*who has come down to back of writing-table*) I beg pardon, sir, but is there to be any dinner to-day ?

BASK. That's Mrs. Baskerville's business, you'd better ask her.

DIXON. (*aside*) I really dare not tell him the facts of the case. (*aloud*) I 'ave asked her, sir, and she said she wasn't sure, as she believed you was a-going out to supper.

BASK. Go to the devil. (*up to BUSBY on sofa*)

DIXON. Yes, sir. (*Exit, L.C.*)

BASK. Busby ! you perceive my position ? (*standing L. of BUSBY, who remains seated*)

BUS. Yes, most amusing. (*chuckling*)

BASK. Amusing !

BUS. (*chuckling*) Lor, how they did laugh !

BASK. They did, Busby, they did, but at what ?

BUS. I don't know.

BASK. Then observe me, Busby, they laughed at my wife's behaviour to me.

BUS. (*in great enjoyment*) Droll ! very droll !

BASK. Droll ! Busby, your ideas of fun are simply repulsive.

BUS. (*looking surreptitiously at card*) Well, of course, she didn't like your going to supper with the other girl. (*pockets card*)

BASK. I didn't. Busby, you're a jackass ! (*crosses him to R.*)

BUS. (*pondering*) Jackass ! Here (*beckoning BASKERVILLE, who goes to R. of him*), wasn't there another jackass somewhere ? (*puzzled*)

BASK. You be d——d. (*turns on heel down L. Lights begin to go down very gradually*)

DIXON. (*without*) Yes, sir, dinner is a little late to-night. (*Enter DIXON, L.C., ushering in MR. WAGSTAFFE ; the latter carries a black bag in one hand and his hat in the other*) Mr. Wagstaffe ! (*announcing him*)

BASK. (L.) Ah, the lawyer. (*Exit DIXON, L.C.*)

WAG. (*crossing to BUSBY on sofa*) How do you do, Mr.

Busby ? (*shakes hands and then puts hat and bag on table, L.C.*) Mr. Baskerville, I think (*shakes hands*) I must apologise for calling at your dinner hour, but it was important I should see you and Mr. Busby on the subject of the Pontifex will, and I've been so busy all day I couldn't get here before.

At the commencement of WAGSTAFFE'S speech, BUSBY'S attention has been attracted by the hat, and while WAGSTAFFE is speaking, he rises and slowly crosses to R. of table, L.C., and earnestly looks at the hat but without touching it. BASKERVILLE has also noticed the hat, and being much taken up with it and with BUSBY'S movements only half pays attention to WAGSTAFFE.

BASK. (L.C., abstractedly) Don't mention it. (*goes L. of table, L.C.*)

WAG. (C.) Thank you, I won't. (*aside*) Might have asked me to dinner, I think. (*down, R.*)

BASK. (*looking at hat but without touching it ; aside*) I'll swear it's the same. Busby seems to recognise it too. (*moves round at back of table, L.C., to R. of table. BUSBY at the same time makes a corresponding movement in front of table to L. of table, both gazing fixedly at the hat as they do so*)

WAG. (R., with his back to them) The evenings begin to close in rapidly. (*getting no answer he turns and gazes at them in astonishment*) Ahem ! My hat seems to interest you.

BASK. (*starting*) Eh ? What ? Oh, yes, I like the style.

WAG. Ha ! ha ! I got that hat in rather a curious way. This afternoon I was on the top of an omnibus in Northumberland-avenue. (*up to C.*)

BUS. (*slowly*) That's where I lost——

BASK. (*interrupting*) Your memory,—so it is. (*aside to BUSBY*) Shut up.

WAG. When suddenly my own hat was knocked off my head by this, which appeared to come from the clouds. My hat was crushed by a dustcart, so I appropriated this till I could get a new one.

BASK. Aha ! Very remarkable, isn't it, Busby ? (*goes up to R.C., nervously*)

BUS. (L.) Very ! but what I don't quite understand is this. (*checking off on his fingers ; WAGSTAFFE following him with great attention*) Say that this is the knifeboard ; this is you ; this is your head ; this is your hat ; this is the other hat ; this is the cloud ; this is——(*WAGSTAFFE impatient*)

Enter DIXON, L.C.

DIXON. Mrs. Baskerville's compliments, and would like to see Mr. Wagstaffe. (*BASKERVILLE comes down C.R. of WAGSTAFFE*)

WAG. (*delighted to escape BUSBY*) Certainly ! At once ?

BASK. (*anxious to get rid of WAGSTAFFE*) Yes, yes, go at once and see what she wants. You'll dine with us, of course, Mr. Wagstaffe. (*DIXON raises his hands and eyes*)

WAG. With pleasure. (*to BUSBY*) We will resume this most interesting conversation later. (*Exit, L.C., with DIXON*)

BASK. (C.) Busby ! that hat——

BUS. (*L. of him*) Exactly, say that this is the knifeboard—— (*business*)

BASK. Nonsense, Busby ! I repeat, that hat——

BUS. It seems familiar to me.

BASK. Listen, Busby, suppose there was a sum of sixty thousand pounds justly if not legally yours, suppose that between you and that money there was nothing but a bit of paper ; and suppose that the paper came into your possession, what should you do with it ?

BUS. Give it up.

BASK. Give it up ?

BUS. Ain't it a riddle ?

BASK. A riddle, no ! Busby, that sixty thousand pounds exists, that paper exists. If you had it in your hand what would you do with it ?

BUS. I should spend it ?

BASK. I mean the paper !

BUS. What should I do with it ?

BASK. Yes, for instance, would you—would you burn it ?

BUS. Well, that would be the simplest way, wouldn't it, but where is the paper ?

BASK. Where you put it, in the lining of the hat.

BUS. D'ye think it's there still ?

BASK. The best way to find out is to look. (*lights down*)

BUS. Let's have a candle then, it's getting so dark. (*BASKERVILLE fetches candle and matches from fireplace, while BUSBY gets hat from table. They come down, C. BASKERVILLE holds candle and matches, BUSBY strikes match and lights candle. Lights half up. After some fumbling BUSBY produces the recipe from the hat ; C.)* Aha !

BASK. (*R. of him*) What did I tell you ?

BUS. You told me to burn it.

BASK. No, Busby, no, I asked you what you would do with it, and you said you would burn it.

BUS. And so I will. (*he advances the paper towards candle*) Don't wobble, you're spilling the grease. (*BASKERVILLE nervously stops him*)

BASK. One moment. Perhaps it would be better that I should not be a witness of the deed. (*puts candle into BUSBY's hand and crosses, L.*) Good-bye, Busby, for the present. You

have in you the making of a great criminal. (*going L. DIXON enters L.C. with lamp. Lights full up, DIXON looks from one to the other and finally fixes BASKERVILLE, who after trying vainly to meet his eye exits guiltily by conservatory. BUSBY meanwhile stands with the candle in one hand and the recipe in the other, with a cunning expression on his face*)

DIXON. (*putting lamp on table R. of fireplace, and then coming R. of BUSBY*) Shall I 'old the candle for you, sir?

BUS. Yes, and blow it out. (*gives him the candle*)

DIXON. (*aside*) It's the missing paper sure enough, which well I knows it—you don't want this, sir? (*holding the lighted candle between them*)

BUS. Let me see—you are——

DIXON. Dixon, sir—Mr. Baskerville's butler.

BUS. Oh yes; I say, don't you tell your master I haven't burnt it.

DIXON. (*aside*) I know'd there was some game up. (*blows candle out and puts it on mantelpiece*)

BUS. You see this is a fine thing for hair.

DIXON. (*aside, up stage, C.*) Curry powder! (*coming down R. of BUSBY*) I never tried it with 'are, sir, but it's fust rate with rabbit.

BUS. Very likely, but I never saw a bald rabbit. You see your master didn't like the idea of my having as good a head of hair as himself, and when he found out I had the prescription for the Criniturus he tried to humbug me into burning it. Give me my coat and hat.

DIXON. (*aside; going to door, L.C.*) This is a game and no mistake. (*opens door, L.C., goes outside, leaving it open, and immediately returns with BUSBY's coat and hat, and comes down R. of him*) You wasn't to be caught with chaff, sir? (*helping him on with his coat. NOTE.—BUSBY's hat in this act is an ordinary high black hat*)

BUS. Not me, and now I'm going straight off to the chemist with this. (*puts on his hat he has come in with, turns to go up stage, L.C., but on passing table, L.C., sees his original hat again. This puzzles him, he tries to put the latter on, but finding he has already a hat on replaces it on the table*)

DIXON. (*aside*) I think I see my way to a little profit out of this. (*going, R.*)

BUS. I say, mum! (*up at door, L.C.*)

DIXON. (*at door, R.*) Mum it is, sir. (*Exit, R. BUSBY going L.C. is stopped by TOM and NELLY entering from conservatory*)

NELLY. (*taking BUSBY's arm and turning him round to face the audience, thus placing herself R. of him*) Oh, papa, Captain Kirby's here, and he wants to speak to you. (*brings him down, C.*)

TOM. (L. of BUSBY) Yes, sir, I have a confession to make.

BUS. Fire away.

TOM. I am an only son.

BUS. That's not my fault.

TOM. My father died leaving me an orphan at the age of twenty-three.

BUS. Did he leave you anything else ?

TOM. Nothing, except an affectionate disposition.

NELLY. Oh, Tom, what has that to do with it ?

BUS. With what ?

NELLY. With our marriage.

BUS. I object.

TOM. On what grounds, sir ?

BUS. On general grounds. (*to NELLY, who begins to whimper*) Now, don't cry, but just hold that (*giving her the recipe*) while I put on my gloves. (*goes down, R.*)

TOM. (L., *suddenly seeing the hat*) Nelly !

NELLY. (c. ; *who has looked at the recipe*) Tom !

TOM. Look there ! (*pointing to hat*)

NELLY. Look here ! (*flourishing the recipe*)

TOM. The hat !

NELLY. The recipe !

TOM. So it is. Hush ! don't say a word. We'll tell Mrs. Pomfret that your father has it, and she'll have him run in in no time——

NELLY. And then ? ♪

TOM. He will no longer be in a position to refuse his consent to our engagement.

BUS. (*who has put on his gloves*) Now I'll be off. (*coming, c. ; takes paper from NELLY*) Aha ! I'll have a fine head of hair in a month, so don't cry. (*going, L.C.*)

NELLY. (c., *aside*) Oh, Tom, I can't allow this. Stop him. (TOM moves between BUSBY and door) Father ! (*goes towards BUSBY*)

BUS. (*stopping and facing her*) Eh !

NELLY. Give me that paper, it is not what you fancy——

BUS. Oh, ain't it, though, I fancy it immensely.

NELLY. (R. of him) Father, hear me. (*clinging to him*)

BUS. (*shaking her off*) No, you don't !

NELLY. The paper ! The paper ! (*seizing his right arm*)

TOM. (L. of him) Yes, sir, the paper. (*seizing his left arm*)

BUS. Not if I know it. Here, take her instead. (*swings NELLY into TOM's arms, they immediately forget BUSBY, who takes advantage of it and exits, L.C.*)

TOM. Hurrah, Nelly ! he consents. (*embrace*)

NELLY. Yes, Tom ! and therefore it is no longer necessary

to sacrifice him. Let us stop him. (*movement as if to go to door, L.C.*)

TOM. (*stopping her*) On no account, he might forget he had given his consent.

NELLY. It's very painful !

TOM. It is, but we all have our trials.

NELLY. Ah, Tom, but our trials are here. (*laying her hand on her heart*) Poor papa's will be at the Old Bailey.

TOM. Poor Old Bailey. I mean poor old Busby. (*Exeunt TOM and NELLY into conservatory*)

Enter MRS. POMFRET and MR. WAGSTAFFE, L.C.

WAG. But my dear Mrs. Busby——

MRS. P. (C.) Hush, not that name here ; you have my secret, Mr. Wagstaffe, keep it.

WAG. (R.C.) But consider. Sixty thousand pounds and a husband.

MRS. P. I prefer one hundred and twenty thousand pounds and no husband. (*sits R. of table, L.C.*)

WAG. (C.) But suppose the recipe should not be found ?

MRS. P. In that case it might be worth my while to——(*sees the hat on table, L.C.*) Why, surely I can't be mistaken, by all that's mysterious, it's the hat I threw out of the window. (*taking it up and examining it*)

WAG. (*staggered*) You threw out of the window ?

MRS. P. (*rising*) Yes, the recipe was in the lining. (*searches*) Empty !

Enter MRS. BASKERVILLE quickly, L.C., she has a large sheet of manuscript and a pencil in her hand with which she comes down R. of WAGSTAFFE, taking no notice of MRS. POMFRET.

MRS. B. I've done what you suggested, Mr. Wagstaffe, and have jotted down a few of my grievances against Mr. Baskerville.

WAG. (*aside*) Poor Baskerville !

MRS. P. Excuse me, Maria dear, but Mr. Wagstaffe is engaged with me. (*leads WAGSTAFFE, L.*)

MRS. B. Very likely, my dear Amelia, but my business is particular. (*leads WAGSTAFFE, R.*) Now, my husband——

MRS. P. Bother your husband.

WAG. I entreat——

MRS. B. By all means. But I want him bothered at once.

WAG. Let me beg of you——(*retreats up stage to R.C. at back*)

MRS. P. You must wait——

MRS. B. I can't.

MRS. P. You must.

} (*following him up*)

WAG. Ladies ! Ladies ! One at a time, one at a time.

MRS. P. (L. of him) I want the recipe.

MRS. B. (R. of him) I want a divorce. (BASKERVILLE groans off, L.)

WAG. Listen ! What's that ? (BASKERVILLE groans again)

MRS. P. Someone ill——

MRS. B. Look !

BASKERVILLE enters from conservatory, pale and dishevelled ; he comes down, L., not seeing the others, sits L. of writing-table, and groans again.

BASK. Yes, (taking out letter) I'll do it ; let me read what I have said once more. (takes letter from envelope and reads) "Dear Busby"—Dear ! oh the mockery of it—"Dear Busby, my peace of mind has departed since that confounded recipe was burnt——"

ALL THREE. (aside) Burnt !

BASK. "Why did I permit you to yield to temptation ?"

MRS. P. (aside) What ! that wretched old man——

BASK. "In my mind's eye I can still see you, the candle in one hand, the recipe in the other. (THE THREE advance stealthily on him) That rascal, Dixon, discovered it, too, and I've had to close his mouth with a five pound note, which I shall be glad to receive at your earliest convenience. My conscience will not allow me to keep silence much longer, so I write you this line in order that you may fly while there is yet time. Yours faithfully"—mockery again—"Joseph Baskerville." And now to get it to him without loss of time.

MRS. P. (taking letter from him) Leave that to me, Mr. Baskerville. (hands it to MR. WAGSTAFFE)

BASK. (starting violently and rising) Mrs. Pomfret, what—what do you mean ?

WAG. (C.) That by this letter you stand self-condemned as an accomplice in an act of felony.

MRS. B. (R. of WAGSTAFFE) My husband a felon ! Another grievance, I'll jot it down. (goes up to table, R.C., at back, and writes. WAGSTAFFE follows her)

TOM and NELLY enter from conservatory.

BASK. But, but, it wasn't I who burnt it.

TOM. (at back of writing-table, L.C., NELLY L. of him) Burnt it
it Burnt what ?

WAG. The recipe, Captain Kirby !

MRS. P. (C.) Yes, the recipe, Captain Kirby !

TOM. Nonsense, why we have seen it within the last ten minutes.

MRS. P. Where? (Tom hesitates)

NELLY. Tom, do your duty.

TOM. In Mr. Busby's possession.

BASK. Aha! a thought strikes me. (*rings bell*)

NELLY. But I don't think papa knew it was the recipe. You know he is not quick of apprehension.

MRS. P. Isn't he? You wait till Glimmer gets hold of him.

Enter DIXON.

DIXON. (*coming down, c.*) Did you ring, sir?

BASK. Yes, that recipe. (DIXON *uneasy*) You old swindler, you knew it wasn't burnt!

DIXON. Well, sir, I may 'ave 'ad suspicions.

BASK. (*L. of him*) And yet you took my fiver.

DIXON. Yes, sir.

BASK. Then take a month's warning as well.

DIXON. Werry well, sir, I'm agreeable.

BASK. Are you? I call you d—d unpleasant.

MRS. P. (*R. of DIXON*) If you know so much, you probably know where Mr. Busby is.

DIXON. I, ma'am?

BASK. Yes, you, sir.

MRS. P. If you do know, tell us at once.

TOM. Out with it.

MRS. B. And don't prevaricate.

DIXON. Well, sir, ma'am, I fancy I 'eard Mr. Busby—

BASK. Go on.

DIXON. I am a-going on, sir. I fancy I 'eard 'im say something about—

MRS. P. About what?

DIXON. (*C.*) A chemist, ma'am. (*all rush halfway to door, L.C.*)

MRS. P. Stay, though! (*all stop*) What chemist? (*going to DIXON, who retreats, R.C.*)

ALL. Yes, what chemist?

DIXON. I don't know, but there's one at the corner. (*all rush up to door, L.C.*)

BASK. Hold! (*all stop*) Which corner? (*going down to DIXON, who retreats till he stands right against sofa*)

ALL. Yes, which corner?

DIXON. Round to the left, sir. (BASKERVILLE shoves DIXON on to the sofa, over which he falls, and disappears completely with the exception of his legs, which remain in sight on the sofa. They all rush out, L.C. NOTE.—The sofa should be either a long narrow settee, with no back, or else a sofa with back very low in the middle)

Enter BUSBY by conservatory, his head is tied up in a large silk handkerchief, on the top of which he wears his hat.

BUS. I thought I heard a noise. (*crosses, R.*) I found the chemist. (*sees DIXON's legs on the sofa*) How do you do? (*DIXON slowly picks himself up and rises up behind the sofa*) I'm very pleased to see you again. You don't look well.

DIXON. No, sir. I've 'ad reverses. (*noticing BUSBY's head*) But I 'ope there ain't nothing the matter with you, sir. (*sniffing the air*)

BUS. (*chuckling*) Matter, no, it's going on first rate.

DIXON. (*aside and sniffing*) Hawful smell of curry. (*comes round sofa to R. of BUSBY*)

BUS. I'll tell you all about it. You see the chemist wasn't in, so I showed the prescription to his assistant—such a nice young feller—and told him what it was for; he appeared quite pleased, and said that by the greatest good luck he had a bottle ready made up, and what do you think, he offered in the kindest manner to put some on for me?

DIXON. (*aside*) The young rascal, (*aloud*) and he did, sir?

BUS. Rather! He took such pains to rub it in, and appeared so amused all the time; he was one of the nicest, cheerfullest young fellows I ever met. I say, it do tingle, though. (*NOTE.—From his first entrance in this scene BUSBY should express by his face and movements the ever-increasing twinges the curry powder is causing*)

DIXON. Perhaps it's a-getting at the roots, sir.

BUS. It feels as if it were digging 'em up. I say, he's going to send the rest of the bottle round presently, when it comes you shall give me another doing.

DIXON. All right, sir. (*laughing aside*)

BUS. Oh, by-the-way, the chemist's assistant said that the warmer I kept my head the quicker the Criniturus would act.

DIXON. Then I'd recommend you to go into the conservatory, sir, and sit on the 'ot water pipes.

BUS. But I can't sit on my head.

DIXON. You'll find the counter irritation sufficient, sir.

BUS. Very well, but draw these curtains. (*going L., chuckling*) This is splendid, I can feel it sprouting.

DIXON. (*laughing and closing conservatory curtains*) Well, if 'e ain't warm enough in there, Mrs. Pomfret and the hothers will supply the deficiency when they come back. (*murmur of voices heard*) 'Ullo! here they are. (*goes up to door, L.C.*)

Enter, L.C., with a rush, MR. and MRS. BASKERVILLE, TOM, NELLY, and WAGSTAFFE. DIXON stands flat against wall by door, L.C., and slips out the moment the others enter.

BASK. Not here ; it's inconceivable where he can have got to.

MRS. P. I mistrust that chemist's boy——

WAG. (*sniffing*) Dear me, doesn't it seem to you— ?

BASK. (*sniffing*) Eh ? What ?

MRS. P. (*sniffing*) Dear me !

TOM. (*sniffing*) Why it's——

NELLY. (*sniffing*) No, it isn't, it's—— (*they all sniff*)

ALL. Curry ! (*they disperse about the room following the scent*)

MRS. P. (*by conservatory curtains*) It's stronger here. (*BUSBY puts his head through curtains*)

MRS. P. (*shrieks*) Ah !

ALL. Mr. Busby !

NELLY. Papa !

BUS. Will anyone oblige me with a thermometer ?

NELLY. (*going to him and pulling him out*) Papa, what have you got on your head ?

BUS. It feels like blisters.

MRS. P. What have you got in your pocket ? Where is the recipe ?

BASK. Let's search him.

BUS. Eh ? (*vacantly*)

MRS. P. It won't do, Mr. Busby— Gentlemen, assist me to rummage this old person. (*they all, except NELLY, who stands by in agitation, seize BUSBY, and on his resisting pull off his coat, which they search for the recipe, but without success*)

BUS. Ladies, you tickle. Gentlemen, I'm not going to bed yet.

ALL. Nothing !

MRS. P. (L.C.) Where's the paper ?

BUS. (C.) What paper ?

BASK. (R.C.) The paper you took to the chemist.

BUS. Oh, that paper. (*reflects*)

Enter DIXON, L.C., with a salver on which is a bottle in white paper as done up by chemists, and a chemist's envelope in which is the recipe.

DIXON. (*coming down between BUSBY and MRS. POMFRET*) For Mr. Busby, from the chemist round the corner. (*goes down behind sofa to R.*)

MRS. P. At last ! the recipe ! (*seizes the bottle and pulls off the recipe in the envelope*)

BUS. At last ! the hair restorer ! (*snatches the bottle and goes up a little*)

BASK. There goes my sixty thousand pounds.

WAG. (*crossing to MRS. POMFRET, L.*) I congratulate you, Mrs. Busby.

ALL. Mrs. Busby !

MRS. P. (*resignedly*) Well, since you have let the cat out of the bag—(*crosses to BUSBY*) John, don't you know me ?

BUS. (*coming down, L. of her*) Know you, of course. (*to WAGSTAFFE ; aside*) Who is it ?

WAG. Your wife.

BUS. What, alive ! then I'm off. (*gathering up his coat, and turning up towards door, L.C.*)

MRS. P. (*seizing him*) Oh, John, is it so hard to forgive ? (*falling on her knees, and thereby pulling BUSBY on to his knees. BASKERVILLE who has been talking aside to his wife here takes her schedule of grievances from her and tears it up*)

BUS. I find it easier to forget.

WAG. But she's worth one hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

BUS. (*getting up*) How much ?

WAG. One hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

BUS. (*raising her*) I knew she was a nice woman. (*embraces her. BASKERVILLE also embraces MRS. BASKERVILLE*)

BASK. And now let's have dinner !

MRS. B. Certainly. Dixon, dinner !

DIXON. (*grinning*) There ain't none.

BASK. AND } No dinner ?

MRS. B. }

MRS. P. Never mind, let's go out to supper.

ALL. Capital, we will.

TOM. But where ?

BUS. I'll tell you, (*fumbles in pocket and produces card*) Café Imperial, 10.30.

CURTAIN.

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